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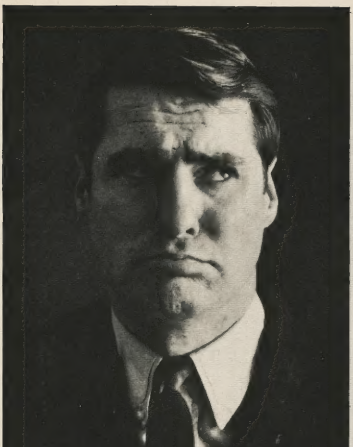

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August 1971 VOLUME 1, NUMBER 6

HORROR STORIES

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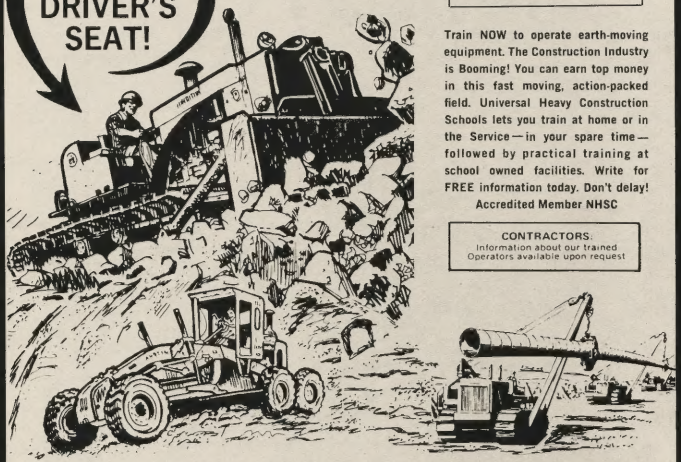

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by GABRIEL VARNEY

"YOU'RE GABRIEL VARNEY, aren't you?"

I turned to face a young and very beautiful girl. "And you, my dear, are Miss Joanna Glynn. Quite a performance you gave, most impressive."

A tired smile briefly lit up her stunning features. "Thank you. But listen. Do you suppose we could talk for a moment —in private?"

I nodded, and taking her arm, led her to a more-or-less secluded corner behind a pair of floor-length curtains.

"This is some party, Miss Glynn. I've never been to a theatre gathering before. And it's only because the producer is a cousin of mine that I've been invited at all. All these famous faces—it makes one feel as if he were in a newsreel or a living society column."

"You're quite a celebrity yourself, Mr. Varney. In fact that is why I want to talk to you."

"Bother, all the time I thought it was my urbane wit and charm."

"Well, that makes talking to you all the more pleasant."

"I see you are as diplomatic as you are beautiful, Miss Glynn. But enough of this. You are worried. What is troubling you?"

"You saw tonight's performance. Tell me, what did you think of it?"

"I know very little about the theatre, but I thought it most excellent."

"Do you remember the third act—the scene in the tavern? While the dialogue was going on, someone walked behind the set. You could see her from your seat in the audience. That wasn't part of the play."

"But Miss Glynn, surely you must be used to stage accidents by now. I remember once at school we put on a play. Everything was going along splendidly until someone hauled up the curtain much too soon. Headmaster, who was playing some sort of villain—we all said he was type-cast!—was in a rather inconvenient state *(Continued on page 48)*

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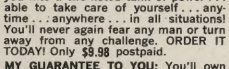

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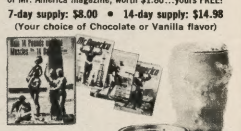

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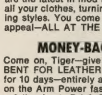

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THE SLAVE OF SATAN

WHO STALKED BY NIGHT

by WILLIAM ARNES

"LET'S LEAVE, JIM," Karen said softly. "They're just about to close the museum and, frankly, this place gives me the creeps."

Jim Donleavy turned toward his girlfriend. He smiled. "Sure, kid, sure. I was just thinking . . . There must be a fortune hidden away in these sarcophagi."

"You wouldn't!" she hissed.

"Why not?" he asked, an amused grin playing across his lean face. "There are no guards on this wing and the burglar alarm could be jumped by a six-year-old kid."

"And we're on the fourth floor in the middle of the city."

"Access is no problem. The new wing has plenty of convenient girders. Yes, it just might work at that."

"I almost think you're serious, Jim." She paused to look closely at his face and was relieved when she saw him smile. "There are other ways to get money. Besides, I wouldn't tamper with the curse."

"Hey, I didn't know you could read hieroglyphics."

"May I have your attention please," a metallic voice intoned. "The museum is closing. Please make your way to the nearest exit. Thank you."

What power of the deepest pit of Hell would dare to reactivate a corpse more than 3,000 years dead!

They turned and walked to the northwest staircase. Jim took one more look around before he opened the stairway door. A guard was checking for stragglers and shutting off the overhead fluorescents.

"Okay," he said when they walked out the front doors of the slate-gray structure. "Now what's this about a curse?"

"Well, I knew that there usually is one connected with mummies so I did a bit of research. It seems that Hem-Li-Tep was plagued with dissension and chaos during his rule. There was more unrest than usual due to a famine. For his protection, and because he didn't trust his palace guard, Hem-Li-Tep had a special bodyguard, Ser, to watch over him in life and to guard his passage into the next world. When he died, Ser slew himself so that he could stand guard in death as he had in life."

"Go on," Jim said as he pulled the car into the stream of traffic. "This sounds like a real story."

(Continued on page 12)

SLAVE OF SATAN

(Continued from page 11)

"Skeptic. But you're hooked, I can tell. Anyway, the legend says that many men tried to violate the sanctity of Hem-Li-Tep's tomb. No one succeeded. Each man died horribly."

"What killed them, Karen?"

"Well, the legend isn't that specific."

"Of course they wouldn't go into detail," Jim snorted, as he slowed the car for a red light. "Like you said, each mummy has a legend connected with it and each one is equally vague. They all died horribly, eh? I don't believe it."

"There's more, Jim. The legend says that Hem-Li-Tep's treasure was the most valuable of the Koruthic Dynasty. No one succeeded, true. But if anyone did, he would lose what he had prized the most in life."

"That sounds fair, Karen. Now all this talk of curses has brought grumbles to my stomach." He glanced at his watch, turning his wrist so the street light illuminated the dial. "What say we stop for a quick bite."

Karen nodded glumly. She felt that Jim had been too quick to change the subject.

SATURDAY MORNING dawned and found Jim Donleavy putting his plan into action. He showered, dressed, skipped breakfast and drove over to the County Art Museum. He parked his Olds next to the construction site and walked over to the small knot of men standing over a sheaf of blueprints.

"Good morning."

"Mornin'," one of the men said. "Can I help you?"

"Yes," Jim said. "I'm looking for the foreman."

"Well, you've found him. What can I do for you?"

Jim sized the man up. He was short and stocky, with a swatch of red hair showing under his hard hat. Jim thought the man looked cordial enough. He figured he had nothing to lose.

"My name's Jim Donleavy," he said, extending his hand. The other man took it in his firm grip. "I'm a student at Pacific University. I'm studying architecture."

"My nephew, he goes there too," the man said. "He wants to be a doctor. That's fine with me. I'll build him an office and he can cure my ills."

"As I said, I'm studying architecture. I thought I might do a story for the school paper about the new construction here. What did you say your name was?"

"I didn't, but it's Miller. Harv Miller."

"Well, Mr. Miller, it sure would help my studies if you could show me around the site. You know, tell me about the materials and the technique you use. I'd learn more and," Jim said smiling, "I could get you some free publicity. Might even help to drum up some business for you. That is, if it's not too much trouble."

The florid man smiled. "No, no trouble. You'll have to sign a waiver, though, releasing the company from any liability."

"No problem there." Jim wished he had used another name with the man. Oh well, he thought. There's nothing I can do about it now.

"Sure, sure. I understand. Can we start now?"

"I'll be right with you," Miller said. "Just let me clear up some details with the boys. In the meantime, feel free to look around."

"Thanks, I'll do that."

After he finished with his crew, Miller brought the waiver over for Jim's signature. After glancing at the scrawled name, Miller tucked the form into his breast pocket and guided Jim around huge spools of electrical cables. They ascended the new wing's skeleton and stepped out onto a tool littered floor.

"Watch your step around here, son. Try as I do, the men still leave their equipment where it falls when the whistle blows."

"Do they work on Saturday," Jim asked, stepping over a rivet gun.

"No, just me and some of the supervisors going over the plans."

"I imagine you must have a lot of trouble with tools and materials being stolen."

"Not really, Mr. Donleavy."

"Call me Jim."

"All right, Jim," Miller said. "We have an arrangement with the museum. Their guards sort of keep on eye on things. We've got a watchman also, but he's not good for much. He's visible, but he couldn't stop kids throwing dirt in a sandbox. Besides, this is just the frame going up now. When we get the flooring and the siding, glass and such, then we'll beef up security to protect the valuable stuff."

They scampered over the girders and Jim heeded Miller's warning about not looking down. He followed the older man along a steel beam extending from the new wing to the Egyptian Culture room.

"When this wing is completed," Miller was saying, "we'll get the boys in here with compression hammers and knock out a door. The rest of the wall will stand . . ."

Jim wasn't listening. His eyes found the silver tape around the burglar alarm. He knew the latch would give him no trouble. He glanced around and at the lower left corner of the old wing he saw the outside alarm box. That could be taken care of also. He turned back to Miller.

"Why that is fascinating. And a good way to save money, too."

"There's more to be seen if you'll step this way, Jim."

After an hour of discussion, Jim thanked Miller and promised to send the man a copy of the story. He was formulating his plan as he drove from the museum to the shopping center.

"KAREN, I CAN'T make it tonight," Jim said, holding the phone away from his ear. He fully expected an emotional outburst, as Karen was extremely possessive and suspicious of last minute cancellations.

"Look, something's come up." He was surprised at her calm reaction. "I'll call you later. Better yet, meet me at the beach at about midnight. Make it behind the drive-in theater. I'll have a surprise for you. Right. 'Bye."

He hung up the phone and glanced at the open toolbox on his bed. He checked the cans of foam wax, and made sure the insulated wire was properly coiled.

"Let's see," he said aloud. "Glass cutter, alligator clips, screwdriver. Check."

He snapped the box shut, slipped into a pair of overalls and walked rapidly to his car. He grumbled silently about the full moon, slid behind the wheel and drove over to the construction site. After timing the guard's schedule, he climbed over the chain-link fence, crouched in the shadows, then inched his way over to the ladder resting against the blood-red girders. By the time the watchman completed his circuit, Jim was hiding behind a pile of sheet metal on the first floor.

When the moon slipped behind a cloud, he walked over to the wall of the old building and located the alarm box. Jim pulled out the cans of foam wax, uncapped one, and pointed the nozzle into the alarm

(Continued on page 54)

the undie world of Lili St. Cyr

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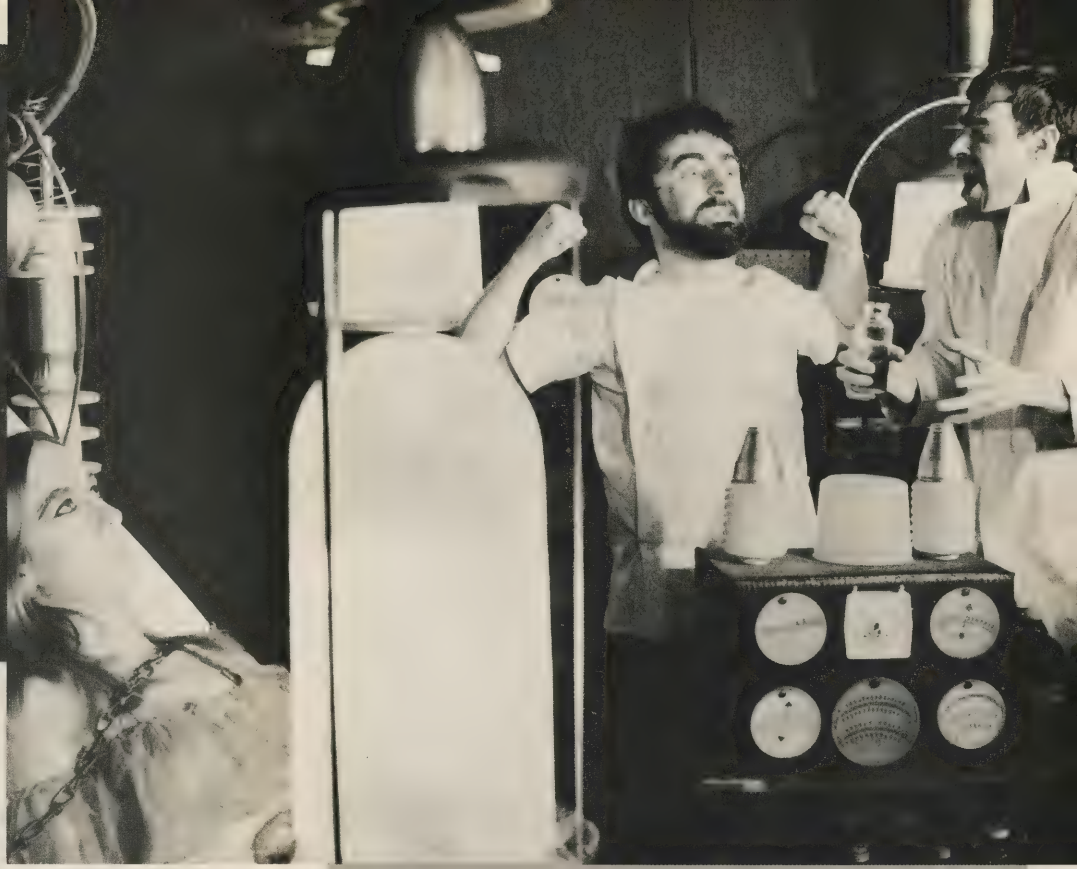
SEVEN VICTIMS FOR A BLOOD-MAD GHOUL



A maniac who called himself "scientist" needed fresh brains for his sickening creation of corpses and rotting flesh. The whole city was rocked in terror as each man began to ask himself: "Who will be the next to die!"

by CHARLES THOMPSON

"OKAY," the assignment editor was saying. "This morning, at eleven, I want you to get down to Municipal and cover the reception they're giving Dr. Nickerson."

"Our new neurosurgeon?"

"Right. Ever since Gordon upped and walked out without a trace, Municipal's brain boys have been short-staffed. While you're at it, give me some background on the disappearance. Tie it in with the new man."

I got to my desk just as the receptionist poured my morning cup of coffee. The insistent ringing of the telephone rose above the clamor of the newsroom. I put down my coffee and picked up the receiver.

"Hello, Charlie?"

"Speaking."

"This is Chief Henderson. We found another one. Had your breakfast yet?"

"No," I answered. "Just working on my coffee."

"I'd drop that, too. This one is as bad as the others, maybe even worse. I'm out at the old Tucker farm. Can you get here fast?"

"I'm on my way," I said, dropping the phone into the cradle and *(Continued on page 16)*

grabbing my jacket from the back of the chair. I raced out of the newsroom and told the receptionist where I was going.

Another one. Another headless corpse, this time lying in the weeds of the Tucker farm. As I slid behind the wheel of my Ford, I reviewed what the police had so far. This was the fifth body. The other four had been found in a five-mile radius of Mackinaw County, each one headless and bled dry. The first time I'd seen one of them, I'd retched up my breakfast. By now, I imagined the police were hardened. I knew I could never be that tough.

I picked up State Road 87 outside of town and turned off onto the secondary road that led to the Tucker farm. As I crested the top of the hill, I saw a circle of police cars and one ambulance. The misty morning was broken by the blood pink of the red flashers. I parked the car, flashed my press card at the officer guarding the roped-off area, and walked to the circle of policemen.

"What've you got Chief?" I asked Henderson. He turned around and smiled grimly.

"We've got the fifth corpse. And a maniac, I'm sure. He's around here chopping people. No clue except the corpse."

"Who found it?" I asked.

"A teenager shooting quail. Made him pretty sick."

"I imagine it would," I said, remembering my reaction. I glanced at the corpse which lay covered with a white tarpaulin. I flicked my hand and the medical examiner pulled the sheet off. The body was that of a young girl, about twenty. She wore no clothes. One glance at her curled hands told me that she had suffered before she died. Chief Henderson wasn't kidding when he said the man was a maniac.

"What about clues, Chief?"

"She was dumped here. There are no signs of a struggle and no weapon. There isn't too much blood here either. Okay boys, take her away." He gestured to the ambulance crew and they lifted their burden and placed it into the white wagon. We watched it bump over the rutted access road before it sped off along the main highway.

"Chief," I said, I don't think we're dealing with a maniac. Not a butcher, anyway. A sick killer wouldn't be so careful about not leaving clues. He might go berserk, true. He might commit bloody slaughter, granted. But there is a method to his madness. I think we're after an entirely different character."

"And who might that be? Or what might it be."

"Too soon to tell."

"You wouldn't be withholding information, would you?"

"C'mon, Chief. You've known me for more than six years."

"You're right. I'm sorry. It's this madman. This is the fifth girl he's killed and there's no break in the case. I'm about baffled."

"So am I, Chief. But if I come up with anything, I'll let you know."

As I drove back through the outskirts of the city, I racked my brain for a link which tied the five girls together. Aside from their youth, and the state of their corpses, there was no instance which would have brought them together. Their mutilated bodies had been found in a circle around the city. There had to be something.

I LEFT work early that day, grabbed a quick dinner, then began the drive home. The sky had turned gray and fog was rolling in from the lake. I turned my headlights on low beam and inched my way through

(Continued on page 44)

The maniac's "mark": neatly-drilled holes in a skull. He would stop at nothing in his foul quest to make the dead rise again.

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Who says you have to spend a small fortune for a flowering shade tree?,—then spend half a lifetime waiting for it to grow?

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Just picture the miracle that takes place on your property when you beautify your home and grounds with the world's most beautiful flowering shade tree. You take any spot in your garden, on your front lawn, next to your patio or alongside your driveway . . . and in virtually no time at all see that barren, sun-beaten patch suddenly bathed in the cool shadows of this prize specimen—this super-growing, flowering shade tree. And when we say "SUPER" . . . We mean a tree that grows so fast, —and with flowers so profuse—that in just one single year it towers so high that never in your life did you imagine a tree that could ZOOM to such breathtaking height in just a single year. Yes, it is the most exquisite sight you've every set eyes on.

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- **Trees Of The Eastern U.S. and Canada,** *Harlow*
- **The Book Of Trees,** *Grimm, Wm.*
- **Living Trees Of The World,** *Everett, T.*
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Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

C.O.D. Orders accepted. I enclose $2.00 deposit. Same 2-way guarantee, of course.

TRAPPED WITHOUT HOPE ON THE SHIP OF THE DEAD

BY [illegible] CHASE

"COME ON, you guys!" Chief Swenson yelled from the loading catwalk. "Let's get that last crate stowed fast. We're already behind schedule. We should have cleared the Narrows two hours ago. Smitty, get up here with that manifest."

"Hello, Chief," Captain Aimes said. "How's she looking?"

"Hello sir, sorry about the delay."

The captain dismissed the statement with a wave of his hand. "It's not your fault, Chief. The front office is responsible for this." Captain Aimes pushed his cap onto the back of his head and scratched his brow. "I like to sail on schedule. Just for that one damned crate. By gosh, I'd like to get my hands on the joker responsible for this. All right, Chief Carry-on."

Swenson tossed a *(Continued on page* **20**

SHIP OF THE DEAD

(Continued from page 19)

careless salute after the captain and re-directed his attention to the activity below. The new consignment had just disappeared below decks and the crew forward was casting the hawsers from the ship to the dockside. He snorted as the *Hong Kong Susie* drifted away from the quay and began her progress downriver.

The steel deck vibrated beneath Swenson's feet and he breathed deeply as the air freshened. "At least we have a half-way decent cook this time." Swenson muttered to the circling gulls. "Maybe he can go one up on Tommy, but he'd better not go too heavy on the spice. And you, my flying friends, you shall eat well, too. Get well soon, Tommy," he continued, "but don't hurry back. Your coffee was like battery acid."

Satisfied with the progress they were making in the channel, Swenson climbed to the bridge and surveyed the foredeck. He watched the crew secure the lines and smiled as the buckets came out and the sailors began to wash down the decks. This ship may be twice the age of the Captain's daughter, he mused, but she's a fine one.

He thought briefly about the uneasiness he had experienced when he heard that Bonnie was accompanying her father to Amsterdam. Even though she had been on board before, and nothing had happened, Swenson still felt that having a woman aboard his ship was begging for bad luck. The two other voyages, with Bonnie aboard, had been uneventful. Still . . .

Chief Swenson dismissed the thoughts from his mind as the *Hong Kong Susie* left New York on the western horizon and steamed out into the trackless wastes of the Atlantic. The ship tossed in the gentle swell, plodding ahead at her respectable six knots. No speedster, he mused, but after forty years at sea she was entitled to take it easy.

"WELL, CAPTAIN, I have the manifest here. That last crate was fowarded to us from Milan Import-Export. Bound for Amsterdam."

"Sit down and take a load off your feet, Chief. The Java's good. Where'd you get that cook?"

Swenson poured a cup of coffee and returned the pyrex pot to the hotplate on the bulkhead. He crossed the cabin to the felt-covered table and eased his stocky frame into a chair.

"Tommy came down with a touch of food poisoning just last night, Captain. When I heard he was on his way to the hospital, I put in a call to the Seaman's Union office near the docks. They had a West Indian gob wanting to see Merrie Old England so we signed him on. I'd kind of like to try their curry."

"It would be a damn sight better than too much steak and kidney pie . . ."

Their conversation was interrupted by a piercing scream which echoed over the dull thud of the engines. Both men glanced at each other briefly before picking up their caps and running out of the cabin and up to the bridge. When they were at the foward railing, they gazed at a knot of men crowding around the base of the cargo boom. Seaman Smith was running up the ladders to where they stood.

"What the devil's going on, man?" The captain shouted. "I heard a scream."

"Aye, sir. It's Malone. The wind whipped the boom cables and Malone, sir, he went aloft to try to sort things out. I'm afraid he's dead, sir."

"Where's your mind, Smitty," Swenson yelled. "You know those cables should be secured before we clear the docks. How long have you been at sea?"

"I checked them, Chief. That's the first thing I do after I go over the mooring lines. They were tight, from the base of the boom to the top pully."

"Then how did they come loose?" the captain asked.

"I don't know how that happened, sir. It never did before. I pride myself on my work, sir. Why I've been serving under you for seven years."

"That's all right, Smitty. There's always a first time for anything. Pity about poor Malone." The captain paused and surveyed the expanse of rolling sea stretched out on either horizon. "He had no family, not that I know of. We'll bury him at sea. Chief, muster up the men on the fantail for the service. Have the body sewed in a shroud and weigh it down with spare junk. We'll have the funeral at 1600 hours."

The captain dismissed the men and stared out at the ocean. As he was rehearsing the words he would speak at 4 pm, his daughter joined him on the bridge.

"Hello, Father. I'm sorry about Malone."

"May his soul rest in peace. How are your sea legs?"

"Never better," she answered. "But won't this cause trouble?"

"Eh?"

"You know, Father. The old superstition about women on board ships. Surely . . ."

"Surely the men won't think this has anything to do with your being here." Aimes interrupted. "You've been with the *Hong Kong Susie* on our runs to San Francisco through the Canal. This is your third voyage."

"But the men . . ."

"All except for the new chap, that cook, these men were serving under me for years. Oh, I'll admit that they did some grumbling the first time. When nothing happened, they decided there was nothing in the superstition. Just an old wive's tale."

"But a sailor is dead now. That means something."

"Now stop it, Bonnie. Malone's death was unfortunate. true. But it was an accident." He paused to stroke her chestnut hair. She looked up at him and he smiled proudly. She had his clear green eyes.

"Go below now, honey, and don't you fret. The weather looks clear and we should have smooth sailing all the way to Amsterdam."

He watched her disappear through the wheelhouse and turned once again to survey his domain.

"MEATLOAF!" The captain snorted. He glanced around to his daughter and Swenson. each engrossed in their mashed potatoes. "And soggy meatloaf at that. Some cook," Aimes said disgustedly.

"But he does make good coffee, Father."

"And we're thankful for small favors, Captain," Swenson said. "This is his first day. Give him some time."

"He ought to walk the plank for this," Aimes grumbled.

Their dinner conversation was interrupted by a rumbling deep in the bowels of the ship. Suddenly the *Hong Kong Susie* lurched to port and shuddered. The plates slid across the table and crashed to the floor. The captain muttered and sprang to his feet.

"Hank!" Aimes shouted. When the messboy appeared, Swenson was getting to his feet. The ship was still listing. "Get this mess cleaned up fast. Chief, come with me. Someone has a lot of explaining to do and they better have a damned good story."

The two men raced below decks to the number one cargo hold. The

(Continued on page 40)

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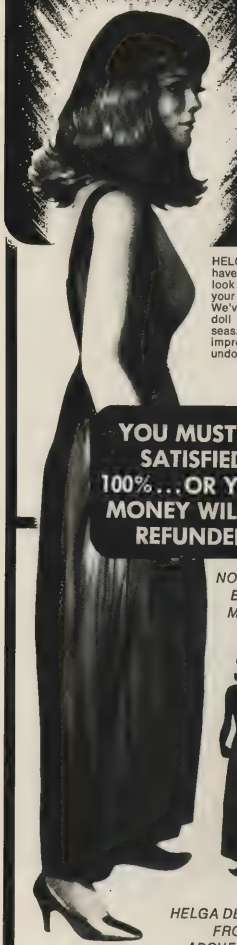

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FANGS OF A FIEND FOR THE GIRL WHO DIED TWICE!

by OBADIAH KEMPH

■ *Dies irae. Dies illa.*

Constance knelt farther into the pew. Conscious of eyes staring at her, she pulled the black lace shawl tightly around her faintly quivering shoulders. The church was freezing. She had never been so cold in all her life.

Solvet saeculm in favilla. Teste David cum Sibylla.

She lifted her head and watched the incense trace faint swirls in the murky darkness of the main nave. Such a heavy smell, she thought to herself. It's making me dizzy. Fresh air—I must have fresh air.

Oblivious to the stares of those near her, Constance rose from the bench and walked to a row of pillars that would lead her to one of the side corridors.

Out of sight from the other mourners, she leaned her forehead against the stone of a supporting column. The stark sensation of its unfeeling, icy mass helped clear her head of the strange, drug-like effect the sacred incense created.

The choir's droning voice seemed so far away, almost dreamlike in its ancient acceptance of earthly death. The closing words of the dread hymn—*Donna eis requiem* echoed, and was lost in the resounding stones, brick, mortar of the church.

"Pardon me, miss, but are you all right?" *(Continued on page 24)*

Constance whirled around to face a tall, smiling stranger dressed, as she was, in deepest mourning.

"I didn't know anyone was here," she gasped, her heart for some unknown reason, suddenly palpitating.

"But I was here all the time, right over there." He pointed to where the columns cast a double shadow and left the corner in utter darkness.

"I hate funerals," Constance blurted out. "The smell of flowers and that incense. I . . ."

"Yes, I know," the man replied with a slow smile. "They have made your head light. Come with me. Let us walk."

"But the funeral. Aunt Alison . . . she . . ."

"She would have wanted you to be happy and comfortable. Come." He offered his arm and Constance took it.

They went through a door and found themselves facing the graveyard. A light drizzle had changed everything into grey, indistinct shadows. The markers and statues leaned at crazy angles on the uneven ground. From far away, a lonely crow cried out. And the trees seemed so full of grey-green branches that they appeared to topple over with the naked weight of dripping dead wood.

"You were very fond of her," the stranger said, opening the low gate into the yard.

"Yes. After both my parents were killed in an automobile accident just after I was born, she took me in and raised me."

"She also left you her money."

Constance turned abruptly. "I've given it to charity," she said coldly. "The trust fund from my parents is enough for my small needs."

The man grinned. "Have no fear. I am not a fortune hunter by any means. My name is Granville. Charles Granville."

"I am Constance Browne."

"I know," was the reply. He again showed his perfect white teeth in a smile. Your picture is always in the

"One pinch of pain and you'll be immortal," the creature hissed softly. "That's not much to pay."

newspapers. I have come here to meet you."

She sighed. "Always the same. Why won't people leave me alone?"

He laughed. "A young and beautiful heiress is always news worthy. And always very sought-after for various reasons."

Constance cut him off. "I must be back at the church. The others are waiting for me."

"Of course. I'll take you back." Again he took her arm and led her down the path to the old church.

At the door, he stopped. "I must be going." Granville bowed and turned to leave.

"Wait." Constance called out. "You never knew my aunt. But you are dressed in black. For whom do you mourn?"

"For you, Constance." He bowed again and was lost in the shadows.

CONNIE, HONEY what's come over you? You've never acted like this before and I'm worried sick."

"It's nothing, Jeremy. Nothing at all. Just the funeral and all those photographers. You know how much I hate having my picture taken. And so many people coming to stare at me.

"But you're so quiet. I can hardly hear you over the phone. And yesterday when I came to see you, you just sat looking out the window. What is out there?"

"Just the world, Jeremy." Sudden intensity made her voice rise. "Oh, aren't you tired of all this?"

"Of what, dearest?"

"This. All of this. Oh, Jeremy," her hands clutched the receiver. Her knuckles turned white with the tension. "I'm sick of this room, of this house, of this life. I want nothing at all. Can you understand that?"

"Yes, in a funny way, I can. Vague hopes are the most frustrating of all, I guess. You have nothing definite to act upon. But what will you do?"

"I'm not sure. But I want to go away for a while. Not for long and not far away, but long enough and far enough to clear my head."

"Connie, you know I love you and that I'd do anything in world for you. Going away never solves anything because the problems will follow you. But I promise I'll not interfere with your plans in any way."

"Jeremy, I love you too. And I want to be your wife—and I shall, just as soon as I can. I'll be gone only a week and when I return, we will be married!"

"Thank God for that. Listen, dear, I must leave you now. I have to be in court in half an hour."

Constance said good-bye and hung up the receiver. As a young lawyer just setting up practice, Jeremy had little spare time to spend even on something as important as talking to his betrothed.

She sat in deep thought. Yes, she would have to get away. Those terrible dreams she'd been having ever since the funeral—always the same, yet always terrifying. In the dream she would awake and walk down the stairs of another house. A noise at the window had disturbed her. Going to a downstairs window she would see a huge seagull vainly beating its head against a pane. Suddenly the door would fly open and she would find herself in the gull's body. Her wing was hurt and she was very cold. The fire in the hearth looked so inviting, but when she went over to it, she'd see a shadow. There in the corner was herself—with an wooden staff. In a flash she became the murderer and beat the helpless bird to death. Blood spurted and Constance would snap into consciousness in the early dawn, half sure that it was no dream.

She sat down by the telephone again and called the railroad station, making a reservation. She had never been to the small summer cottage left to her by her parents. but she had to get away to a place where nobody would know who she was. And the house would be in good condition. Aunt Alison had payed to keep the place in repair as a sort of tribute to her niece and nephew. The nearest town was miles away. All in all, the small house was a perfect place to take a short vacation.

SIX O'CLOCK found her standing in the living room.

"Funny," Constance mused to herself, "even though I've never been here before, I imagined it would look just like this. She wandered through the rest of the rooms. The view was magnificent. Two sides of the cottage faced the sea, and Connie could hear its pounding surf even with the windows closed. She looked out and not even a sandpiper was to be seen scurrying along the grey horizon.

Connie stepped back from the window. The fresh gale that had sprung up began to rattle each pane. She closed the curtains and turned to make a fire in the enormous hearth that stretched for almost half of the room. The cheerful blaze soon illuminated the polished oak planks and cast a warm, rosy glow on the quaint whitewashed walls.

"This is more like it," murmured Connie contentedly as she glanced with an approving eye at the room. She stooped to pick up the bag of groceries she had bought in town and went into the tiny kitchen to fix a simple meal.

The rest of the evening was spent in front of the fireplace with a good book. For the first time in years, Constance felt perfectly relaxed and happy. Her aunt had been a powerful figure in society and as her only relative, Connie inherited all the publicity and obligations. She had practically no privacy from reporters, newspapermen and nosy people in general, and when her aunt passed away. She found herself even more in the headlines. But here, alone, cut off from the rest of the world, she could be herself. The gentle warmth of the fire was making her sleepy. She would need no sleeping pills tonight, just as earlier, the fresh salt air had made her hungry. She didn't have to force herself to eat.

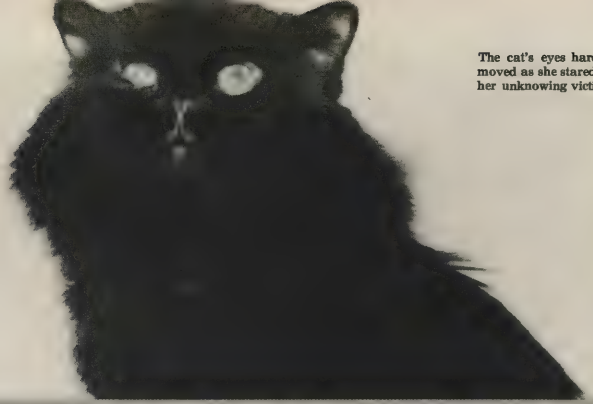
Connie leaned back in the worn, comfortable chair by the hearth and sighed to herself. Maybe this was what life was really all about, she thought. No fancy balls or boring dinner parties or rude interviewers. Perhaps she and Jeremy should settle here once they were married. Dear, dear Jeremy, how much he has had to put up with. And Connie resolved to make it all up to him in some way.

She glanced down at her watch. Only ten o'clock, but she could hardly keep her eyes open. Yawning, she got up and climbed the stairs to bed. She hadn't gone to sleep this early since she was a child. But for some reason she felt exhausted, drained of all energy, but also very relaxed and happy.

CONSTANCE SLOWLY opened her eyes. Her whole body was numb, almost drugged. Her mind seemed fogged. She turned over to go back to sleep when she heard it again. A faint rapping, almost quiet enough to be ignored, but not quite.

Shaking her blonde hair out of her eyes, she sat up and moved to the side of the bed. Connie was dizzy with sleep and paused for a moment to clear her head. The

(Continued on page 36)



The cat's eyes hardly moved as she stared at her unknowing victim.

Revenge of the Witch

by AVERY WEST

Three hundred years she lay in wait to punish the descendant of a mortal who foolishly had tried to rid the world of this Bride of Evil!

"WHAT YOU NEED is a house pet."

Jonathan Laurence stopped abruptly on the sidewalk. He glanced around him, but he was alone on the sun-drenched street.

"That's funny," he whispered to himself. "I could have sworn someone was talking to me."

He looked around again, shrugged his shoulders and continued walking to his real estate office. The sun was bright, hanging motionless at its eight o'clock position. The streets were just coming alive with early morning commuters and he could hear the muffled growl of the subway beneath his feet. As he walked on, Jonathan Laurence forgot the strange call he had heard. When he reached his office, he had put it out of his mind completely.

"Good morning, Mr. Laurence. Your coffee is ready."

"Thank you, Mrs. Nelson. Any calls?"

"This early? Goodness, no. Mr. Penny was by yesterday after you left. He said he'd call today about the house on East Hawthorne."

Jonathan looked down at his desk and began to sort his papers. He soon became engrossed in his work, completely forgetting about the passage of time. The telephone jangled him out of his involvement.

"It's Miss Roberts, Mr. Laurence," his secretary intoned. "And she sounds mighty flustered."

"Thank you, Mrs. Nelson. Put it through on one." He punched the phone button and greeted his girlfriend.

"Hi, Jon. How are you today?"

(Continued on page 28)

Sorcery still survives today. Here is a model dressed in the latest necromancer's fashion.

Mrs. Sybil Leek is the world's most famous witch. She's in the midst of mixing a powerful spell.

"Can't complain, Cindy," he answered. "It's too early in the morning for that. It's too nice a day, also."

"Jon, something's come up. I can't make it for lunch today."

"Anything wrong? You sound a bit on edge."

"Oh, nothing really," she sighed. "My hoary-headed boss suddenly turned rotten this morning. One of his deals fell through yesterday and there's an awful lot of work we have to catch up on. He thinks we might salvage something if we work fast. And that means lunch at the office. So our date is postponed."

"That's okay, honey. I know how it is. Something has come up here, too."

"Really? Honey, I've only got about a minute before Old Man Soames finishes his coffee. What's the latest?"

"I've decided to get a house pet," Jonathan said. "The tought came to me this morning."

Mrs. Leek is a "white" witch and does only good things—like making crops grow and helping everyone.

"You mean that I'm not enough of a pet for you?" she purred.

"You know that's not what I mean," he said, his voice dropping low. "I'll keep you posted."

"Fine, Jon. Gotta run now. The boss beckons."

They said their good-byes and he returned to his paperwork. Three customers called back during the morning and he closed deals with all of them. He picked up his phone and buzzed his secretary.

"Don't order for me today, Mrs. Nelson. I'll pick up a sandwich and have lunch in the park."

But Jonathan Laurence never arrived at the park that day.

HE TROTTED down his office steps, crossed the shopping center mall and headed for Sam's Delicatessen. As he hummed to himself, he remembered that he wanted to buy a pet. His house was getting too quiet lately. Maybe he'd buy one and keep it until he and Cindy were married. It would have to be something that could stand long periods alone, and that let a dog out of the picture. Fish held no interest for him and birds were a mess, so when Jonathan was abreast of the pet shop, he turned to the window and decided to buy a cat.

"Good afternoon, sir," the aged proprietor said. "Can I be of service?"

"Yes. I'm looking for a pet."

"Did you have anything particular in mind?"

"Well, I was thinking of a cat."

"Ah, very good," the store owner said, rubbing his hands together. He indicated a series of cages along the far wall. "If you'll just step this way, sir, we'll see if we can set you up with something nice. Or should I say 'someone.'? Cats, after all, do have personalities."

"I'd like a black cat," Jonathan said impetuously.

"Black, sir? Not many people specifically request black cats," the owner said, his gray eyes twinkling. "But you happen to be in luck. I do have one black cat here, but she's no kitten."

"That's fine with me. I don't want to have it, I mean her, eating my drapes and getting into all sorts of mischief."

Jonathan was led to a large aluminum cage. He tried to listen to the proprietor's details about the difficulty of unloading a black cat, but Jonathan's eyes were locked onto the sleek animal.

It sat in the cage, regal-like, on a soft, tufted cushion. The cat's fur was as black as the bottomless pit of Hell. his mind jerked alarmingly as it made the reference, but he pushed the thought from his consciousness. If there was one thing Jonathan Laurence prided himself on, it was his complete disbelief in things supernatural. When the cat's eyes glared into his, the stare was inhumanly piercing. He knew he had to have the cat. He would pay anything for it.

"How much is it?"

"Oh, she is a real bargain, sir. I can't seem to get rid of her and here you are requesting her. Fine, fine. I can let you have her for, oh, three dollars."

"Only three dollars? She really is a fine animal. She must be worth ten times the price."

"That may be, sir, but my price stands."

Jonathan smiled and took out his wallet. He extracted a five-dollar bill and told the owner to give him the change in cat food.

"Oh no, sir, that would never do," the old man said. "This cat must eat only the kind of food you would eat. I know that sounds odd, sir, but she is, after all, a very special cat."

"And she must have a wonderful personality, as you put it." He

(Continued on page 38)

Sybil and her raven. She likes to use birds much more than cats.

African drums beat out a steady rhythm of death deep within the jungle!

"TOMORROW WE'LL DANCE IN THE WHITE MAN'S BLOOD!"

By ROY MARVIN

THE BIG RIFLE cracked again and again, echoing out across the flat floor of the valley. The three riders drove their horses at breakneck speed over the hard grey clay. Zulus, like most Kaffir people, were not noted as riflemen. But whoever was blazing away with that .500 express rifle had had plenty of good target practice!

The Negro on the white pony lurched in the saddle, as the elephant-killing slug tore through his lungs and pitched headfirst to the ground. The rifle boomed again and the white man on the lead horse skidded in the dust as his horse dropped dead beneath him. The Negro on the remaining horse swerved his mount to keep from running him down and kept going toward the safety of the ring of wagons a hundred yards away.

Halfway there another bullet caught up with him. It clobbered him with an ugly wet slap and took the top of his head off. His riderless horse circled the wagons and ran off across the veld.

The white man was on his feet now and running for the wagons on a zigzag course, still clutching his Winchester. A bullet slapped at the clay near his feet and screamed wildly as it ricocheted over the wagons. With a last desperate burst of speed he reached the wagons and dived headfirst over the thorn-bush barricade piled between two wagons.

"Good show!" said a voice in English as Karl Leydecker rolled to a sitting position. Leydecker looked up into a cheerful red face.

"By Jove, you gave the beggars a run for it!" the Englishman laughed. "We've been encircled here for three days now by these infernal blacks. I didn't think there was another white man within a hundred miles."

"There isn't now," Leydecker answered dryly with a slight Dutch accent. "We were jumped this morning. Must have surprised the Zulu as much as it did us when we came over the pass and rode right into the back of their camp. Had to leave the wagons and run for it. Those of us that were mounted almost made it. But a couple of those bastards are good shots—too good."

Leydecker was on his feet now and looked around him. The English had drawn their twelve long wagons into a circle nearly fifty feet across. The spaces between the wagons were filled in with thorns of the notorious "wait-a-bit" bush. Baggage and feed bags had been piled in (Continued on page 58)

ADVENTURES IN WITCHCRAFT

by WHITTIER FOWLES, Ph.D.

LAST ISSUE, my column was devoted entirely to the dread phenomenon of the vampire. And now I intend to complete the other half of the picture. Strange, isn't it, that vampires and werewolves should be automatically associated with each other? But, then, perhaps not. Maybe at the very beginnings of the world, these legends—or these realities!—were one in the same. A creature who lived on human blood and who could change into animal form at will, breathing living terror into the hearts of frightened folk huddled around a blazing bonfire late at night. But all this is mere guesswork. We know practically nothing of the early history of our ancestors and what they feared most of all. But enough of this. Let us get down to the subject for today—the werewolf!

Lycanthropy, derived from the Greek *lukos* (wolf) and *anthropos* (man) is certainly one of our most ancient superstitions. Roughly, it is the transformation, the changing, of a human being into an animal. Which animal, depends entirely on the locale. In Ancient Greece, for example, men could turn themselves into dogs; in India and Asia, they were tigers; the transformation in Russia was that of a bear; and the leopard was the special animal of the African nations. There is great confusion as to whether these changes were voluntary or involuntary, temporary or permanent. No one knows for sure, and the surviving records are contradictory.

As an interesting sidelight, the animal most favored during the early Christian era was the ass or donkey. Many, many histories and well-documented cases still are in existence. For the interested student, I would recommend *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius of Rhodes (in Robert Graves's translation), a second-century A.D. author. It deals with his transformation and consequent adventures—and it's an interesting story besides! St. Augustine in his *City of God* also cites several clear-cut examples of lycanthropy. It is very obvious that the early Church Fathers firmly believed in its existence.

And now we come to werewolves. As you can see, "werewolf" and "lycanthrope" do not mean exactly the same thing; rather, "werewolf" is a form, but certainly not the sole form, of lycanthropy. The word "werewolf" comes from our Anglo-Saxon ancestors—*wer* (man) and *wulf* (wolf).

Luckily, as far as the plight of the poor wolfman went, we have more information. There were two kinds. First, voluntary. These persons were cannibals and delighted in the taste of human blood. They were also possessed of some magical powers. But certain spells had to be cast first. They stripped their clothing and put on a mantle of human flesh; over this they donned a wolf's hide. The brains of an animal were consumed, followed by the drinking of water found in a wolf's paw print on the ground—and the transformation was complete. France of the Dark Ages and medieval period saw a great deal of this form of activity. Werewolves were called *loups-garous* at this time. There is a very famous poem by the sixteenth-century writer Marie de France, called *Bisclavert,* the song of the werewolf. If you ever happen to come across a copy of this rare poem in your library, read it. It's fascinating.

The second form a werewolf could take was an involuntary one. Perfectly innocent persons (or not-so-innocent. In Armenia, for example, a sinful woman must be condemned to spend seven years in the shape of a wolf before she could be forgiven. And there are numerous accounts of saints being changed into wolves and other animals until their souls were made clean again.) suffered through the witchcraft of others. A medieval sorcerer had the power to change anyone he wished into a wolf. But all was not lost for the enchanted one. He had several means open to him to regain his true shape. The man-wolf could overcome the spell by: kneeling in one spot for 100 years; losing three drops of blood; having the Sign of the Cross made over his head; being addressed on different occasions by this baptismal name; and having his forehead struck three times with a knife.

THERE IS an ancient, fascinating tradition common to almost every nation in the world. The day after Christmas, a lame boy goes into the streets calling forth all the slaves of Satan to follow him. If anyone hesitates, a tall man comes with a whip and lashes him most cruelly. Once these unfortunates are on the

(Continued on page 48)

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Letters

Dear Sir:

Imagine my surprise when I opened the pages of your very interesting magazine and found a story about my old friend, Gabriel Varney. The last time I saw him (why, it must be fifty years ago at least) he mentioned something about becoming a detective. But naturally I never took him seriously. I wanted to be a ballerina myself, and I guess Gab didn't believe me either. It turned out he was right and I was wrong. I'm now a grandmother many times over and never got any further to the stage than to take a few dancing lessons. But dear, dear Gabe realized his intentions!

Would you please be so kind as to forward this letter to him? I would love to hear from him again. Fifty years—my, time really *does* fly!

Kathleene Corwaine Nesbitt

(We are happy to oblige you, Mrs. Nesbitt. When we contacted Mr. Varney he was delighted to hear from you. Any more of Gabe's old school chums who care to write to him are very welcome. And, Mrs. Nesbitt, we also hope you enjoy another of Gabriel's fascinating cases that is going to appear in this issue. The ED.)

———

Dear Sir:

Is there any sure way to tell if a grave contains a vampire without having to open it up? I know this sounds silly and all—especially coming from a reasonably-educated person living in the Twentieth Century—but so many strange things have been happening here in K---(not wanting to cause unnecessary alarm, we have deleted the real name of the town and state. The ED.) that I don't know what to make of it.

We're all so tired lately and many of us have strange sores on our necks that won't heal. And I've noticed that many of the townspeople have developed an odd, dull look in their eyes.

Please, is there any way we can tell if vampires are about? I'm afraid we haven't a moment to lose.

Name Withheld
By Request

(We've asked our own Whittier Fowles on this one. And it just so happened that he had intended to go a column on vampirism anyway. Please refer to his column, "Adventures In Witchcraft" in this issue. But a word of advice: all this could possibly be caused by something else—perhaps something in your drinking water or in the air or even in the soil. Check with your Board of Health. Not every unexplained happening is caused by the supernatural—only most of them! The Assoc. ED.)

———

Dear Sir:

I am the woman who wrote in to you about the ghosts in my house (February issue) and now want to thank you personally for the help you have given me.

I was truly surprised at the amount and volume of mail I received. It was so kind of you to take the trouble to forward it.

At last count I've had 249 sincere replies and a few crank letters, but I guess it takes all kinds. Anyway, we've tried the various spells, charms and things your readers suggested. And we have found one that really worked.

It's salt! Just sprinkle it around the rooms. In a few days all the ghosts had vanished. Of course I will admit I rather miss them—or at least a few of the less obnoxious ones—but it's something I'll just have to get used to.

Once more, I want to thank both you and all the lovely people who wrote in to me and my family.

Mrs. Martha Scott

Dear Sir:

I was wondering if anyone could tell me whether or not vampire bats are native to this country. I live on a farm. One day I noticed my pet cat was missing. A week later I found her corpse in the barn—and there wasn't a drop of blood in her body. Next day some chickens were lost, then a dog, and finally a whole flock of geese couldn't be found. I discovered a dehydrated body that I think may be a chicken, behind the woodshed. Some neighbors came across the dog's corpse by the road. I'm still looking for the rest of the animals. I know they will all be completely bloodless. We do have bats in our barn. Do you think some of them could be vampires or is that species located just in South America?

Sven Goldrung

Dear Sir:

What can I do with a ghost who won't leave me alone? I found it in a haunted house I went to once as a child, and it refuses to give me any peace. Nobody else can see it except me, but it's annoying as hell. It mimicks me and makes fun of me constantly. What should I do?

S.N.

(Teach it to sing and then go on Amateur Hour. You could do a duet like "Me and My Shadow" or something similar. But seriously, have you ever asked it politely to go away? Ghosts are very sensitive to insult, you know. Be nice to it and it'll be nice to you. A little Golden Rule action is good for the living and the dead! The Cleaning Lady)

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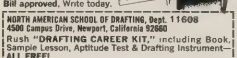

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GIRL WHO DIED TWICE
(Continued from page 25)

rapping was louder now.

She got up—and the coldness of the floor fully awakened her.

"Oh my God," she whispered. "This isn't the dream!" Her heart began to beat so hard she could hear it pounding in her ears.

Her hand gripped the bedpost.

"No," she said aloud. "I must go down and see. I must see this to the end."

Trembling, she put on a dressing gown and hunted for her slippers. All the while the tapping and scratching were becoming louder.

Constance decided against turning on any lights. She would peer out the window first to see who—or what—was outside, without letting him—it—know that anyone was at home.

She crept slowly down the stairs, carefully testing each step against its creaking. Keeping to the wall and avoiding the center of each board, Connie held her breath to slow down her hammering heart. Each step was terror. One small noise would give away her presence. Just like the horrible dream—only it was real, it was happening. Painfully she reached the landing, then quickly darted around the corner. Luckily most of the living room was in complete darkness and she was able to keep in the shadows. She glanced fearfully at the front door. It was firmly locked and bolted.

Sliding around to a window, she tried to peer under the heavy muslin curtain to see outside, but there was no space between the material and the ledge. She looked hopefully across to the other window on the opposite side of the door, but it too offered no help. The knocking and scraping increased.

Connie cleared her throat.

"Who is it?" The firmness in her voice surprised her.

"A friend. Open up."

"Who are you?"

"Charles Granville. You remember. The cemetary."

"Oh." She fumbled at the door knob, then hesitatingly said, "Please come in."

The door swung open to reveal Granville, dressed as he was for the funeral, in deepest black. He stepped in and smiled. "Sorry about this late hour, but I had to see you."

"What ever for, Mr. Granville? I came here for a rest. I want no visitors—not now anyway. I . . ." The rest of her sentence trailed off into silence.

"Get dressed," the man ordered, his eyes glowing. "The night grows short and we have much to do. You'll not need a coat. This will keep you warm." He pointed to his long cloak. "But wear something on your head. This is a—formal—occasion."

Connie found herself going back upstairs. It wasn't that she wanted to, or even that she didn't; but her will seemed to have been submerged somehow in a far greater whole.

She dressed automatically. And selecting the heavy weil she had worn to disguise herself from publicity and photographers on the train, she walked down again.

Granville was waiting by the foot of the stairs. "Here, put this on."

He placed the cape around her shoulders. The weight of it almost caused Constance to lose her balance. "Steady, there. You'll soon get used to it. In fact you'll get used to lot of things before you're very much older. Come. The time draws near."

He led her into the night. There was no moon now, and the wind had died down, leaving the beach as still and as quiet as the first day of creation. Connie felt no chill of winter with the strange cloak on her shoulders.

"Where are you taking me," she murmured dazedly to the man beside her.

"To a special place that only I know of. It's in ruins now, covered up by sifting sand and rushes. I used to live there many, many years ago. Ah, this night, this time—what memories it brings back to me. Listen."

Granville began singing in a strong baritone voice. The words to his song were a strange, long-forgotten language. And the melody was filled with unnatural, half-finished cadences. In spite of its strangeness, Constance understood the song perfectly. Visions began appearing before her as the music picked up in tempo.

"Stop!" she screamed suddenly. "I know what you are now and I will not follow you!" A surge of fear had destroyed the man's hypnotic hold over her. Constance tore from his grasp and flung the heavy cape to the ground. She ran. She ran faster than she had ever done in her life. Small plants and bushes seemed to reach out to her, to try to stop her flight. Over the ice-frozen sand she

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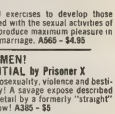

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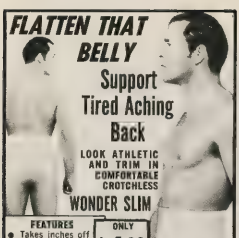

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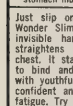

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flew—until with a strangled gasp she felt herself pitch forward into a great abyss.

She had come home.

"Where am I?" she murmured softly when once again she came to life.

"Here," was the laconic reply. A match was struck. Granville's face loomed evilly in the quick glare. He smiled and leaned foreward to light a candle.

Constance felt the cold stone under her. Her eyes soon used to the darkness were able to pick out objects in the murkiness of the small, long closed off room. "I am in a tomb," she said evenly. Somehow it really didn't matter.

"Correct, my dear. My tomb, and now yours. I had to bring you here to this. That is why I met you on the day of the funeral. I could see that you were unhappy, dissatisfied with life. You wanted more. And you shall have it. You are a most fortunate woman for I have chosen you out of every other female on Earth—to be my partner."

"Your wife? Impossible. I love another," she said dully.

"Jeremy. I know about him also. Go ahead. Marry him. Your being another man's wife will hinder me not in the least."

"How is that possible?" Constance yawned. She felt so warm and sleepy. "I have given you immortality, power, dominion over time and space. You may have your piddling Earthly love, if you wish. But you can also have more—much more."

Connie's hands went to her throat. She gasped.

"Do not worry. The scars will heal in a few hours. Now come to me."

Constance arose from the slab and stood facing him. His fangs, grown long in the flickering light, gleamed like the tapers themselves. Once more he lowered his head.

She gave a gasp and writhed in agony-ecstasy as knife points pierced the soft flesh of her neck. Granville's tongue gently lapped up the few trickles of blood that still flowed.

"In a few hours it will be day. You may leave whenever you wish. There is no danger," he said, sensing a feeling of panic in Constance. Quickly adding, "We can only be active at nightfall. But we may move unencumbered in the day or sleep, whatever we wish. When will you be leaving?"

Constance smiled broadly, her teeth also shining like knife-point fires. "Tomorrow. I want very much to see Jeremy. So young and strong and healthy. I'm sure he will be delighted with the surprise I have for him."

THE END

REVENGE OF THE WITCH

(Continued from page 29)

accepted his change and picked up the carrying case containing his new pet.

"And may she bring you many hours of happy entertainment," the proprietor called after him.

Jonathan decided to take his cat home. He opened the case and the black animal leaped out, then bounded onto his lounging chair. He crossed the room, intent on moving the animal, when it's green eyes focused on his and seemed to stare right through him. Suddenly a terrible pain leaped through his body, doubling him over in agony. He sank to his knees, clutching his stomach. Beads of perspiration sprang out on his brow. Without warning he felt his skin grow warm, then it began to burn. He moaned and raised his head, trying to look at the cat. It seemed to smile and suddenly the pain ceased. He crawled to his phone and dialed his office.

"Mrs. . . . Mrs. Nelson. This is . . . Jonathan . . . Mr. . . . Laurence. I won't be in this afternoon. No, nothing is wrong. It must have been lunch . . . what I ate for lunch. Yes, all right. Tea and lemon. Good-bye."

He hung up the phone and searched for the cat. It was nowhere in sight.

THE TELEPHONE jangled him out of a storm-tossed sea of nightmares. He faintly recalled the horror of his journey. His body had been pierced, pummeled and torn. The air was hot, stifling, as he was journeyed through the very borders of Hell. The pain had been beyond belief and he had awakened in twisted, sweat-soaked sheets. Jonathan reached over to the night table and pulled the phone into his bed.

"Yes?" he gasped.

"Hello, lover. This is your girlfriend. In case you've forgotten."

"Cindy . . . I . . . I haven't forgotten. Yes, our date. I'm sorry. I got sick after lunch. Something I ate."

"What did you have for lunch?"

He plumbed the depths of his mind before answering. "Lunch? No lunch. I remember now. I didn't

eat. I bought the pet. Yes. I bought the pet and then I came home and I got sick. Breakfast. Breakfast made me sick."

"How do you feel now? Any better? Would you like me to come over?"

"I'm better but I'd like you here . . ."

His voice chocked off into a muffled cry of terror as waves of white-hot pain lanced through his body. His tortured brain cried out for relief against the onslaught of fevered nerve endings. The phone was too heavy to hold. He didn't have the strength. It was too painful to support. Jonathan's head fell back against the pillow and he managed to croak out a few words.

"No," he said, trying to keep his voice steady. "I'll be all right. Don't come over."

"Jonathan, Jonathan, wait!" Cindy screamed. "This afternoon. Tell me something. What kind of pet did you buy?"

"A . . . black . . . cat," he moaned. The searing agony reached a new peak and his body arched. It strained off the bed, then Jonathan collapsed into unconsciousness.

"Wake up," a voice commanded.

Jonathan stirred, but not soon enough. The glowing fires of Hell twisted through his veins. When the pain ceased, he opened his eyes. A woman's shape fluttered into view. He tried to focus her face.

"Cindy?" he gasped.

"No, I am not Cindy," the woman said contemptuously. "I do suppose it is time we were introduced. But let us go into the living room. Your strength is restored. You may rise."

He followed her to his living room and she settled into his lounge chair. He sat on the sofa across from her. Jonathan began to shiver, then the chills subsided.

"I liked this chair from the moment you brought me here."

"Who . . . what are you?"

"Ah yes, all in good time." The woman smiled, revealing white, even teeth. She shook her head from side to side and her raven hair billowed softly.

"I am Selena. I was your cat. Now, for as long as I desire, I am a woman."

"A witch?" he asked incredulously.

"Yes," she said. "Do you not believe, mortal? Ah, my power is strong enough to convince you, too. And you shall die, begging for mercy, acknowledging my power and the sins of your ancestors.

"I have been a cat for quite some time, mortal. But that was part of

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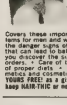

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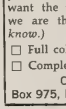

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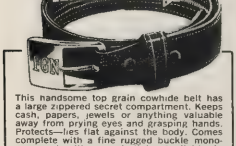

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the plan. A cat may outlive its master and then disappear. Who will suspect? Will anyone question the loss of a cat? No. But a person is a different matter. No human being can live too long without being hunted to the ends of the earth. This enabled me to stay around and to fulfill the curse visited upon your pious forebears.

"They burned my mother at a stake three hundred years ago. She was innocent and yet they roasted her flesh, calling on the name of their foolish savior. I was a witch even then, as I am now. I escaped. And I swore vengeance on the descendants of all those connected with that foul trial. As they have suffered down through the centuries, so shall you suffer. And you have already tasted a portion of my power."

"Jesus, save me," Jonathan moaned.

"That does no good, fool!" Selena said. "And now you shall experience the torture suffered by my mother so long ago."

JONATHAN FELT his skin growing warm. He shifted on the couch. Selena's green eyes seemed to spit fire. He could feel his sweat soaking through his pajamas.

"As they burned my mother, so shall you burn. For you are the last of the old line of Lawren. So feared and so terrified were they of this curse that they changed their name, even their residence, not knowing that my power would seek them out and destroy them. They gave you up for adoption, hoping the change of your name would save you. But my power was greater. Now feel the flames, mortal, and call on me for a merciful end."

Waves of red fog drifted over Jonathan's vision. His body was tormented. He was burning alive. Slowly he toppled, and pitched down to the carpet. His mouth worked but no words came forth.

"You beg, mortal, but not loud enough. I shall show you the mercy my mother was shown, on that Salem hilltop."

Suddenly a cry of agony pierced the room and waves of cooling foam washed over Jonathan's body. The screams continued and through a fog of receding pain he saw Selena crumble and fall to the floor. Her screams died suddenly as she burst into a flash of blue-white flame. Then she was gone, drifting out through the fireplace and up the chimney in a foul-smelling haze.

Jonathan turned his head. It took all his remaining strength. Before he lost consciousness, he saw Cindy smiling down on him. Then he slept.

He awoke to find Cindy spooning hot soup into his mouth. The liquid dribbled down his chin as he tried to speak.

"Hush, darling."

"But Selena . . ."

"Selena is destroyed, Jonathan."

"Then you . . . But how?"

Cindy placed the bowl of soup on the night table and smiled. She brushed her blonde hair from her eyes and began her explanation.

"There was no way for me to track down Selena before tonight. I was able to defeat her only because some of her power was being used to destroy you.

"The night Selena's mother was burned as a witch, I also was in Salem. Both women were guilty of sorcery, or casting spells and bringing disease to the community. A direct ancestor of yours, a long way back through the years, was the chief magistrate of the court which sentenced both women to death. Selena damned everyone connected with the trial. My mother knew the truth of the charges against Selena and she vowed to protect your family."

"Then you're a witch also?" he asked, retreating on the bed.

"Relax." She smiled. "Not all witches are evil."

"Did Selena know about you?"

"Only indirectly. She knew there was a power thwarting her attempts on the descendants of Lawren."

"Will you stay, now that you've saved me?" Jonathan asked.

"I'll stay with you *forever*, darling."

THE END

SHIP OF THE DEAD

(Continued from page 20)

crates, once stacked neatly and secure, lay piled against the left side of the hull. The two men bent to examine the frayed lashings.

"Smith! Where the devil is Smith?"

The young sailor came on the run. Aimes turned to face him, placing his face next to the young man.

"What's your explanation for this? Let me warn you, it better be good. If we were in a storm, we'd be on the bottom right now."

"Captain, take a good look at these ropes. They're frayed. One light wave and they were ready to go," Swenson said.

"They're new ropes," Smith said with amazement.

"Impossible," Aimes yelled.

"Captain, look," Smith said,

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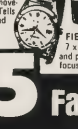

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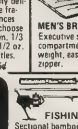

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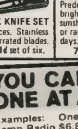

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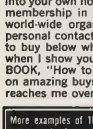

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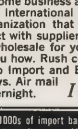

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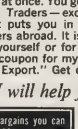

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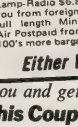

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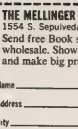

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pushing a sheaf of yellow papers toward the captain. "Right there, sir. They came in this morning and I checked the last of the cargo. Captain, look at the rest of the ropes. These are fresh. You can see for yourself."

"He's right, Captain," Swenson said. "They are new ropes. There's still a label on this one."

"Then how could this have happened? They weren't cut."

"It could be ghosts, sir." Smith said.

"Belay that." Aimes declared. "Don't start any talk with the crew either. Bonnie's been here before . . ."

"It's not your daughter, sir. It's the new fellow, the cook. The messboys say he's a witch doctor or something."

"Well, that would explain his lousy cooking," Swenson said sarcastically.

Their conference was interrupted by an explosion. The ship waddled in the swells. Aimes raced to the intercom and jabbed a button.

"Engine room, engine room, this is the Captain. What's going on?"

"Bad trouble," a voice said above the sounds of screams. "Our number one steam line burst and fried two men. They're dead. There's a third one here in pretty bad shape. I don't think he'll make it."

"I'll be right there," Aimes said.

As the three men in the cargo hold started aft, the voice-box on the wall buzzed again. Aimes swore and ran back to the instrument.

"Captain, this is McGuire. We have ice floes ahead!"

"What?"

"Ice, Captain. As far as I can see."

"Any icebergs?"

"No, sir," the voice replied.

"I'm heading aft for the engine room," Aimes said. "If the situation changes, call me immediately."

The captain, Smith and Swenson raced through the ship's interior. Aimes sought some explanation for the deadly chain of events. The death of Malone, the ropes, the ice, and now the explosion all pointed to a supernatural power intent on sinking the *Hong Kong Susie*.

"WHAT DO YOU make of it, Chief?"

Swenson frowned. "It doesn't look good, Captain. We haven't been at sea for one day yet, and four men are dead. We're trapped in an ice floe when it's spring and this area should be calm. And the ice is getting tighter. With all due respect to *Hong Kong Susie*, she ain't no icebreaker. If this gets any worse, the hull will collapse like tin-foil."

"How about repairs?"

"I've got the crew working double time on the boiler. We should be able to get up steam in about twenty minutes. Smith has a party working on the cargo. We're shaping up."

The damage report was interrupted by a muffled sound in the passageway. Both men looked up in time to see someone being hustled into the cabin. Aimes rose to his feet.

"What's going on here? I gave strict orders . . ."

"Stowaway, Captain. We found him hiding in number one hold."

"Stowaway, eh?" Aimes addressed the middle-aged man. The captain sized him up quickly: about 47, gray, receding hairline. "I suppose you can give me an explanation."

"Most certainly, Captain. My name is Harry Michaels and I am a marked man. Your cook, I believe. But there is someone on this ship. Yes, I think it would be Hirsani."

"That's not his name," Aimes said.

"Whatever. But I have no wish to see all your men die."

"That's the limit!" Aimes roared. "I've had enough of this mumbo-jumbo about our cook. Smith, get me Honi. And be quick about it."

"Now what's all this about, Michaels," Aimes asked, when a detachment of the crew had gone to fetch the new man.

"Hirsani wants me dead." Michaels's hands fluttered. "I had some business dealings with his father. The market shifted and the old man was wiped out. I tried to explain that it wasn't my fault, but Hirsani blamed me for that, and other misfortunes." His voice wavered as he spoke. "I tried to flee, to cover my trail. But Hirsani was one step behind. He worked his evil gradually. First my business collapsed. Then my . . . my loved ones grew ill, gravely sick. I contacted some friends at Milan Import-Export and they agreed to ship me out of the country. But I heard what was occurring aboard ship."

"And you're ready to die, to give up and let him kill you?" Swenson asked incredulously.

"To save my wife, my daughter and her family. Yes. And to save your crew, Captain. They deserve to live. I have been a selfish man."

"Hogwash, Michaels. What about this Hirsani . . . er. Honi? What about his selfishness, going to any lengths to kill you?"

"I cannot judge that man, Captain. And it would do no good, for he has the power over our lives."

When the ship's cook was thrust through the doorway, he glanced sullenly around the cabin. When his eyes fastened on Michaels, he grinned evilly.

"I see you have come to your senses, my friend," Hirsani said.

"Honi . . . er. Hirsani, I order you to stop this madness," Aimes shouted.

"It will do no good. Captain. If you do not turn this man over to me, to do with as I see fit, then you shall all die."

As if to accent his threat, the hull creaked and groaned. The ice was closing its tight grip. Aimes knew his ship could not take much more.

"And you will die with us also," Swenson said.

Hirsani merely shrugged. "But my father's death will be avenged."

"I didn't kill him!" Michaels screamed.

"But your business dealings forced him to take his own life. And for that you must die."

"I've no intention of turning anyone over to you." Aimes said.

Almost before he had finished speaking, the ship vibrated in the ice's grasp. The intercom over the side-board buzzed.

"Captain," cried an anguished voice. "The bow plates are opening up!"

"Okay Hirsani, you win."

"Captain, this is blackmail," Swenson yelled.

"And our lives, Mr. Swenson. Yours, mine, the crew's and my daughter. Balance them off against our Mr. Michaels. Mr. Michaels, I'm sorry."

"Don't be, Captain," the man replied. "I just hope Hirsani here makes it quick."

"It will be slow and it will be painful," Hirsani said with glee.

A crowd of sailors watched Hirsani lead his captive down the deck to the stern of the *Hong Kong Susie*. In the bleak light of the moon reflecting off the ice floes, they saw an ax come crashing down. It sliced into Michaels's body as the man jerked on the deck, screaming in agony. At last it was over and Hirsani wielded the ax one more time, slicing the head from the corpse and pushing the remains over the side. As if appeased with the sacrifice, the ice released its death-grip on the freighter and she wallowed in the clearing seas.

"Continue on course for Amsterdam," Aimes said. Then he walked to the front of the bridge where he filled his lungs with the brisk ocean breeze. THE END

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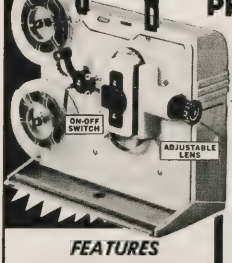

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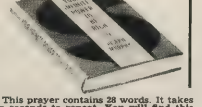

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BLOOD-MAD GHOUL

(Continued from page 16)

the misty night. When I saw the girl step onto the road, I slammed on the brakes and threw the car into a skidding turn. I glanced in my rear view mirror and saw the mist swirling around her tattered dress. She lay face down on the tarmac.

Both her eyes had been gouged out and her empty, bloody sockets sent an icy chill up my spine. She opened her mouth speak but only blood trickled out. Whoever had removed her eyes had also cut out her tongue. I grimaced, then lifted her and carried the shivering body to my car. She moaned constantly and her arm pointed from the direction she had come. I made a turn on the highway and raced back to town. After dropping her off at the emergency ward at Municipal Hospital, I drove to the police station.

"I'm pretty sure it's the same man, the one responsible for the others," Henderson said. "But I don't know how we're going to get her to tell us anything. She's critically injured and in shock from loss of blood."

"Can you get us in to see her?"

"The doctor might get us in. If she comes around."

We drove up to the hospital and left the car in the lot. The corridor was quiet. We saw the resident in charge of the case.

"She's conscious now, but very weak," he told us. "I don't think she's going to make it."

We walked slowly down the corridor and the intern left us in front of the room. I took a deep breath and walked into the hushed quiet while Henderson approached the bed.

"Can you hear us?"

The girl moaned.

Henderson tried a few more questions and got the same response.

"Was it a man?"

The girl nodded her head. Her arm began to wave from side to side, perhaps in an attempt to indicate a direction.

"Was it west? On the west side of town?"

She nodded her head, moaned and drew one last, ragged breath. Chief Henderson checked her pulse and shook his head wearily.

"She's gone."

"But she gave us a clue. The west side of the city. That's where she was cut up."

"And what is on the west side? About two hundred square blocks of apartments, businesses, schools,

offices."

"But at least it's a start."

"That's true. Okay, we won't get anything else here. Let's go."

We told the doctor about the girl's death and walked to the hospital's cafeteria. Henderson called his office, relayed the details and we had coffee.

"I don't understand it," Henderson remarked. "We have six dead girls now, with a new wrinkle. I don't know how we can stop him before he strikes again."

"I don't think you have to worry about him. At least for awhile."

"What do you mean?"

"The first five girls were decapitated. The sixth girl was not. I don't think he really meant to kill her, or to use her as he did the other five. She was just unlucky."

"But how does she tie in with the others?"

"That's what I should be asking you, Chief."

THE CALL came through the next morning and the message was brief and terse. "Whoever you are please listen. I need help. I'm in a loft at 382 West Main. Hurry." Click.

I stared at the phone and jiggled the button. The line was dead. The voice was that of a young girl. I ran out of the office and down the steps. There was no time to let anyone know where I was going. I just had to get there in time.

I jumped three lights and got over to the address about ten minutes after the call. The building was in a deserted section of town near the old piers. I swung the Ford to the curb and glaced at the weatherbeaten stone façade of the building. The address was right and I bounded up the steps, squeezed through the broken slats barricading the doors, and raced up to the loft. As I went higher in the building, I heard a shrill, piercing scream echo in the musty dampness. The cry was one of sheer terror.

At the top step I stumbled over a round, white object and fell to my knees. It rolled across the landing and stopped under a dusty window. I saw that it was a skull, with two holes bored into it. I gasped, rose to my feet and slammed against the door.

The old wood splintered and I tumbled through the broken shards of the door. I was in a laboratory and a fiend was saying: "Welcome to my workshop. Now if you would be so kind as to sit down . . ."

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There was a butcher knife in his hand. He held all the cards and I wasn't about to argue.

"I am Doctor Graigo. How did you find me?"

"I got a phone call," I said. They had me tied to a massive wooden chair. I could only answer his questions.

"You lie!" his assistant shouted. The small, bearded Graigo had to restrain his co-worker. I shuddered as he calmed down.

"He probably tells the truth, Yemi. The new girl. Before we found her she probably did call. Twice the pity."

"What do you mean?" I asked, trying to wriggle my hands. They were tied fast.

"My laboratory. Now you have seen too much. My experiments. Now you know all. But my work has not been for nothing, my friend. In front of you, there is the latest and finest of my creations. I hope you do not disapprove. Anything must be done for the name of science. Observe how perfect and lifelike, she is. Ah yes, my finest."

"Then *you're* the killer . . ."

"I am a scientist," Graigo screamed. He walked over to where I sat, pausing with his face inches from mine. "I am a scientist," he hissed, "and soon I shall begin a new round of experiments. I must make a mate for my Katya. But first a tour, shall we? You would want to know what is going to happen to you in the name of scientific endeavor, do you not? So. Come."

They undid my feet and guided me through the grisly rooms. In the cold storage, I could see the five severed heads, each wrapped in white linen, sightless eyes staring through the misted glass.

"Why, Graigo? Why did you do it?"

"My Katya. She was dying. A tumor, they said, so malignant that is's growth could not be stopped before making her a vegetable. Oh, how I tried . . ."

"Then you must be Doctor Gordon, the neurosurgeon."

"No!" he yelled, shoving me back to the room where the girl lay sleeping. "I am Doctor Graigo. You will die screaming for the mercy of my name."

He pushed me ahead of him, steering me clear of the figure reposing on the slab.

"What about the girl who called me?"

"She will die. That is so tragic. But now Katya will live."

I knew I had nothing to loose.

WHEN THEY brought me back to the main room, they neglected to re-tie my legs to the chair. The fiendish doctor began to prepare the marble slab which would hold my body. His fingers flashed over the dials that would keep the drained blood from coagulating when they cut off my head.

"Come here," he ordered.

"To my death?" I asked. I advanced slowly and paused before the selection of surgical instruments. I leaned against the formica table and wedged a scalpel under a metal tray. The blade sawed through the nylon line around my hands.

"Come and get me," I said.

Yemi ran toward me, waving the butcher knife. He swung with the wicked blade and opened up a long gash in my forearm. I raised my feet and kicked him as hard as I could. Yemi staggered back and slid into the massive bank of transformers that supplied Graigo's power. His scream shattered the quiet of the laboratory as seven thousand volts of electricity coursed through his body. His back arched and twin wisps of white smoke curled from his ears. His skin sizzled and his clothes burst into flame. Yemi was dead but Graigo was advancing.

Whirling toward the door, I began to fling cases and cannisters at the advancing figure. Suddenly he screamed and flung his hands over his face as the bottle of acid shattered against the skin. His cries of agony reached me even as the remains of another bottle seeped into the smoking transformer coils and ignited. I glanced at Katya, already enshrouded in smoke, and ran down the stairs to the phone.

"So it was Dr. Malcolm Gordon, Chief," I said, sipping my coffee. "When the most modern surgical techniques could not save his wife, he cracked. Went all to pieces. He went back to a more primitive medicine."

"And the girl? She was dead, wasn't she?"

"Sure, all the time. But perfectly preserved. He thought he could bring her back at any time. But he was wrong."

"And so he killed six times, seven if you count the last girl. By the way," the Chief asked, "what about the call you received?"

"The girl was dialing blind, Chief. That's the only explanation. Just lucky, I guess."

"But not lucky enough. She was killed in the blaze with Graigo."

THE END

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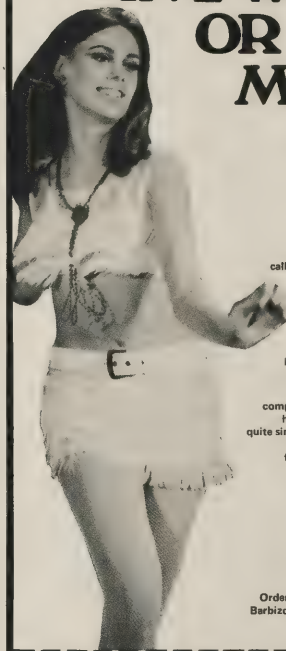

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ADVENTURES IN WITCHCRAFT

(Continued from page 32)

road, the unhappy people are immediately transformed into wolves. Traveling in packs, they devour cattle, but are not permitted to kill or wound human beings. At the end of twelve days, they are freed from bondage for another year. The transformation into human form: the victim falls suddenly to the ground as though he were sick. He remains as still as a corpse for three days, not moving, scarcely breathing. When he comes to, he remembers nothing of his former condition.

If one wounds a were-creature, the person changed into human form will exhibit the same marks on his body. Keep this in mind. A further method of identification is that the wolf-man will exhibit extreme palor and have dark, haggard eyes, seeing only with great difficulty. His tongue will be dry and he will suffer from an almost constant thrist.

From the Book of Daniel in the Bible—where Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, is changed into an ox—right up to the present time (especially in the Balkan countries) lycanthropy has and does remain with us yet. And for a tradition as ancient as this one, there maybe some truth to it. After all, where there's smoke, there's fire—and where there are fangs, there may be a werewolf hiding in the bushes to trap the unwary!

THE END

KENSINGTON THEATRE

(Continued from page 8)

of undress when revealed by mistake in half-naked splendour in front of a very stuffy audience. He never fully recovered from the shock. In fact, resigned the following year. Good thing too. The man was a perfect ass."

"But that was different, Mr. Varney. At least your headmaster was *human*."

"A debatable point, Miss Glynn. But what do you mean?"

"The figure that passed between the wall and the set couldn't have gotten there—but wait. Let me take you to Kensington Theater. You can see for yourself.

The party was beginning to be a bit of a bore and I had no regrets about leaving it. We got our coats from check and had the doorman call a taxi. Five minutes later we pulled up in front of the deserted building.

"Damn, I can't find the keyhole. Have you a flash?"

In my years of experience at ghost-hunting, I've learned several tricks. And the most basic of all is always to have some kind of light handy. I pulled out a tiny battery-operated flashlight and shined it at the stage door.

"There, we've done it. Johnnie is usually on duty at night," Miss Glynn explained as she stepped inside and switched on a light, "but his wife is sick and he had to take the entire week off. I'm so glad you've decided to help us, Mr. Varney," the girl said breathlessly. "The entire cast is petrified to be here—even in broad daylight. I was delegated to contact you."

"Hold on a moment, Miss Glynn. First, I haven't decided to help you. And second, there may be no spook at all."

"Whatever do you mean?"

"I mean that ghosts aren't as common as many people think. I've said time and time again that in most cases, the supernatural beings are merely faulty drain pipes or squirrels playing in the attic or impertinent neighbours, naughty children. Or any combination thereof."

"Oy, such fancy language."

I looked at her sharply. "You're not English?"

"I was born in Brooklyn, old thing. Do you like my accent? I picked it up on the way over."

We both laughed heartily. "You certainly had me fooled, Miss Glynn."

"My real name is Sadie Greenbaum, but you may call me Joanna. A press agent made up most of my biography—public school, grandfather a colonel who had served in 'Inja' and all that."

"Well, *my* real name is Gabriel Varney and you may call me Mr. Varney, my dear. Now what is it you wish to show me?"

"It's on stage. Come on."

She led me through the wings until we were standing in the middle of the set. "I know it looks pretty creepy right now with the rest of the house in darkness. But

even in the middle of a show we can all feel it."

"Feel what?"

"*It.* Whatever is troubling the theatre. Here's the window. As you can see, there is approximately two feet separating it from the brick wall at the back of the stage. Wait a sec."

She crossed the stage and turned on the lights. Joanne returned.

"Look through the window."

I leaned over and peered in. "But this can't be!" I exclaimed and withdrew my head. The set went directly against the wall on both sides, forming a large staple-shaped structure. There was no way for anyone to be behind the window and then walk into the wings.

"But you saw it yourself. Someone was behind that window—and disappeared! Now explain *that* in terms of squirrels or bad neighbours!"

"You may have something there after all. Let's take a quick tour of the rest of the theatre, shall we?"

Joanne led me around the dressing rooms, prop areas under the stage, green-room in the rear. She hadn't a key for the upstairs parts, which were always kept locked for fear of theft. We next went to the audience area.

"As you can see," the young actress said, her voice echoing eerily in the vast, empty darkness, "this is quite an old theater. Well over two hundred years old."

"Tell me, has it seen much alteration?"

"Surprisingly enough, no. Of course it's been redecorated often, but the basic building is pretty much the same as it was in 1785. However, you really should talk to Johnnie about all this. He knows more of this theater than anyone else. It's a hobby of his. Johnnie collects newspaper articles, old blueprints—you know, things like that. He's rather famous for it. See him."

"I'll do just that, Joanna. But it's growing a little late. I'll be taking you home right now."

I WAITED A WEEK before calling the theatre. Joanna had told Johnnie about my interest, and the watchman was expecting my call. This was going to be a very unusual case, I quickly realised. Ghosts are by nature timid and it was practically unheard of for one to make an appearance in front of a large crowd—unless . . .

I reached for my hat and coat and went down to the theatre.

Johnnie was waiting for me when

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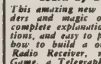

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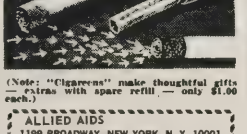

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I arrived. A funny, wizened little man, he was nevertheless helpful and obviously concerned about his theatre.

"Professional pride, you might say, Mr. Varney," he remarked as he shared his thermos of coffee with me in the wings. "We've had many fine actors and plays here and I want it to continue. But something is here in this house—and it's making the crew and cast nervous. It gets in the way of their job and I want it to stop."

"Joanna tells me that you probably know more about this place than anyone else. Tell me something, has it always been plagued by spirits?"

"That's the odd part about it, Mr. Varney." Wrinkles played across Johnnie's brow as he pondered how he was going to phrase his next statement. "Of course I've always known she was here—the ghost, that is—and sometimes when I was working late I'd see a white blur flash across the house. But always at the opposite end of the theater. If I was on the stage, she'd be in the farthest corner of the audience, and vice versa."

"You told no one of this?"

"I didn't see why I should. If the ghost only appeared to me, there was no reason why I should give the theatre a bad name. Nervous actors give bad performances."

"You were perfectly right, of course. But are you sure no one else ever saw this apparition?"

"Yes—but of course some silly chorusgirl or other would shriek at something, which usually turned out to be a mop lying on the floor. Theatres can be pretty spooky places sometimes."

I nodded in agreement, remembering the eeriness of my late night's adventure with Joanna. Even now, during the day, Kensington was pitched in odd, half-light.

"Joanna's also mentioned something about the building's not having been changed much. Exactly where have any alterations taken place?"

Johnnie thoughtfully scratched his head. "I'm not quite sure about that. We've just had a few changes—new designs, wallpaper, paint. All that is carefully noted down in records and contractor's blueprints. But where the place has been modernised—that's quite another story. I've got a list of all changes in the stage, wings, dressing rooms. But it only goes back about seventy years. Anything done before that time can only be guessed."

"Obviously, then, the ghost—if it is one—centres her operations backstage somewhere."

"But I've seen her all over the theater, Mr. Varney."

"Correct. But an apparition must have a home base to emanate from. I would be very much interested in inspecting the rest of the structure."

I'd already seen the stage with Joanna, and asked Johnnie to lead to the dressing rooms and storage areas. They seemed to be quite in order.

Except for the prop room. Immediately I sensed something was wrong, something was definitely out of place.

"Johnnie, what's behind that wardrobe?" I asked, pointing to a massive, oaken armorie that spanned nearly five feet across.

"The rest of the wall I would imagine. That thing's been there for as long as I can remember."

"Well, give me a hand for a moment. I just want to move it a few feet down."

He pushed and I pulled. Inch by inch we shoved the heavy closet down the rough planking.

"There, just the wall, Mr. Varney," Johnnie gasped out testily. "There's nothing else."

"I'm not so sure." I took out my trusty pocket torch and began inspecting the newly-exposed brick. After a quick scrutiny, I was inclined to agree with Johnnie—until I located a very slight indention in the brick and mortar.

"Have you some sort of brush?" I called out.

Johnnie nodded, left the prop room, and returned almost immediately. "The charwoman always leaves her supplies in the closet just outside."

I took the scrubbing brush and immersed it into the pail of soapy water which the watchman also had dragged in. A few passes and the bricks began to lose some of their grime.

"Just as I thought." I put down the dripping bristles and stood back to inspect my handiwork. I had cleaned a large area of the wall, and in the midst of it lay a spot that seemed newer than the rest of the brick. About four feet high and three across, it had been hidden by the even coating of cobwebs and grit that had settled on the older section as well.

"Do you know anything about this bricked-up passage?"

"No. I always thought that this part of the theater had never been touched. Too bad we can't reopen

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the doorway. But it's part of a supporting wall and I don't want to weaken it."

"We wouldn't have to open it anyway. John, will this room be in use tonight?"

"No, Mr. Varney. Today's Sunday. There'll be no performance tonight."

"Good. I'd like to try a little experiment."

"But what about the ghost?"

"Don't worry—she'll be a part of it too. I believe I have a plausible explaination for all this; but I'll need your help."

The watchman agreed to aid me in whatever I decided to do. I had several things to arrange. We parted, and planned to meet again later that night.

JOHN AND I set up the equipment in a corner of the prop room. I also had called Joanna in on all this because I thought she should share a part of an experiment that would further our scant knowledge of para-psychic study. Together, the three of us waited. I allowed one small candle to be lit. In the flickering glimmer, Johnnie played patience. Joanna and I talked quietly of her career.

Then we felt it.

"Blow out the light, Johnnie," I whispered. In the gathering tension of the small room, I recited the speech I've always found helpful at times like this.

"Ghosts are mere beams of life, the spot in your eyes that remains after a flashbulb has gone off, a shining memory. They cannot hurt you and are totally unaware of your presense if you make no move to contact them. Spectres never have and never will harm living human beings. I want both of you to keep this foremost in your minds at all times. Let us creep back into the shadows."

We moved into the corner farthest from the exposed wall.

"If either of you feel faint, breathe deeply and rapidly. But please remember that you are absolutely are in no danger."

Abruptly Joanna gasped. We three watched. In front of the brick wall, a small cloud of vapour formed, then gradually took on a hazy shape. I slowly reached over and turned on the machine.

The shade eventually took on a vaguely feminine outline. Our cloud-woman began to whirl. Slowly at first, she gyrated and spun until her foggy form seemed as substancial as smoke from a bonfire. Stopping, she leaned first one way, then the other as if in a dance; then up on her toes in a graceful mockery of life.

Our eyes were rivited on the sight. Dimly I was aware that Joanna had taken my hand and was holding it tightly in her clenched fist. Johnnie was breathing heavily.

The spectre leaped and pirouetted across the floor, spinning faster and faster until it disappeared once more into the unmoving wall.

"Is it over?" Joanna whispered, long moments later.

"Yes," I murmured back.

"Oh God, what was it?" She began to sob from fright.

"Just a memory, a quirk in the lapse of time and space." I reached over to comfort her. "But it's finished now. It's done."

"But what about tomorrow?" Johnnie cut in with a shaking voice. "And the next, and the one after that?"

I got up stifly to my feet and flicked off the machine. Turning, I said, "I want both of you to go home now. But be here at eleven o'clock tomorrow morning. No more for now. Both of your systems have gone through a terrible shock, and you must rest now."

We began walking toward the door. I was entirely spent too, of course. Because no matter how long or how often I come in contact with the other world, I will never be accustomed to it. It is only through the most rigorous self-discipline that I manage to control my urge to run screaming from the sight into a cool, clean night. Spectres indeed are harmless; but they are all the more terrifying since science, logic, the vast storehouse of knowledge gleaned through the centuries, are useless to explain them—or drive the spirits away. And in the end we become as panicked and as helpless as our ancient cavemen ancestors huddled around a fire in the dead of night.

"Remember, at eleven o'clock tomorrow morning. And tell no one of our meeting."

"YOU LOOK REFRESHED, my dear. Did you sleep well last night?"

"Not a wink, Mr. Varney. I kept the lights burning the whole time."

"And I did the very same thing," Johnnie cheerfully called from the door. "My old lady thought I had been drinking. Weird business this. What have you got for us?"

"Come this way, please For a change I'm going to put on a show and you'll be the audience." I led them backstage where I had the movie camera set up. It would

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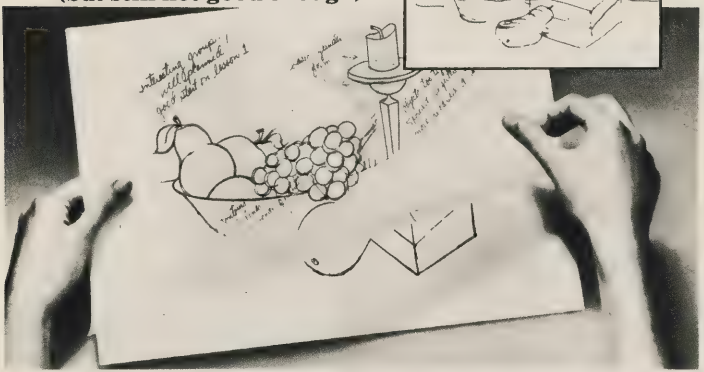

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project on a perfectly blank wall.

"Lights, please."

Johnnie killed the lamps and we three sat back and watched the film. The quality was very poor, I must admit, but I was proud just the same.

"The pair of you are witnessing history. This is one of the few times where a spirit has been captured on film."

The movie was barely five minutes long. It was a weak and fuzzy rendition of a chain of events still fresh and vivid in our memories. At its conclusion Joanna looked at me. "Why and how were you able to get her into the camera?"

"Simple. Ghosts are terrified of light. They're timid, shy, preferring solitude—unless . . ." I drew out the sentence, enjoying their mounting interest.

"Unless what, damn it!" John was exasperated.

"Yes, tell us, for goodness sake."

I laughed. "Unless the ghost were an actress! In life she loved to perform in front of an audience. And when she passed into the spirit world she kept the habit, I guess."

"But who was she and why has she suddenly starting to appear on stage during a performance?" Johnnie obviously was unimpressed by my explaination.

"I did some research before I came here today. After three hours of sneezing from dust, I came across an article in the *London Times* dated 4 February 1871. A murder had been committed in this theatre. A chorusgirl had been stabbed by a jealous suitor. The prop room was, I gather, originally some sort of dressing room. The man sneaked up and killed the poor girl. And her shade is your ghost."

"But why has she suddenly become so active?"

I asked the pair of show people to follow me. We walked out into the audience area.

Pointing, I said, "That light is a new one, isn't it?"

Johnnie nodded. "Right. I told the owner that we really didn't need another fixture and that it would look terrible. He wouldn't listen to me and put it up anyway. Now he agrees and is talking of getting rid of it. But what does that have to do with a ghost?"

"That chandelier is directly above the prop room. Some beams of light must be shining in through the worn planking on the floor. Ghosts can't stand light—and that is why I filmed ours with an infrared camera—she had to leave her home-base more frequently. Even when there was a show on. Whenever that light was burning, she had to be out of its range. But as a former actress, she was well-used to stage lights. And that explains it."

"What are you going to do about her, Johnnie?" asked Joanna. "This show is only going to run here a few more weeks, then it's on to Scotland on tour. I think you should be the one to decide what's to be done."

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Varney, it gets kind of lonesome here late at night. If I tar the flooring so that no light gets in from that fixture—and disturb the actors when the ghost has to vacate her home—I'd just as soon leave her here. I've gotten used to her, and I think she knows I'm around. Someday I'd even like to try to talk to her."

"A wise decision, John," I said.

"I agree," added Joanna. "I'll tell the rest of the cast that our Mr. Varney put the spook to flight so they won't be frightened to work here."

I smiled at both of them. "And we three will share a secret that will always remind us of the time we filmed the show-off ghost of Kensington Theatre!" THE END

SLAVE OF SATAN

(Continued from page 12)

unit's metal louvres. There was a soft hiss and moments later the first can was empty. He uncapped the second can and smiled grimly when the foam gushed from the sides and front of the alarm box. Jim used a third can for good measure, then placed a rag under the unit to avoid any drippings. He then climbed to the third floor and went to work on the museum window, carefully cutting through the glass and jumping the alarm system. He uncoiled the wire he had brought with him, then unlocked the window. He slipped inside, held his breath and looked at his watch. The wax, he estimated, would dissolve in twenty minutes. He would have to be long gone by then.

Moving silently, he crossed the room to where the twin sarcophagi of Hem-Li-Tep and Ser stood in the ghostly halflight of the moon's rays. He slipped a thin nail file around Hem-Li-Tep's lid and swore softly as it popped open. His file clinked to the floor. In the darkness, the sound was shattering. Sweat popped out on his forehead as he listened for any sounds. There were none.

Jim knelt before the open

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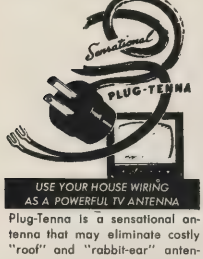

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container and whistled as he shone his shielded flashlight on the bottom. A series of red, green and white dots sparkled in the light.

"There must be a fortune in gems there," he said softly. "And that wouldn't include the gold settings."

Working rapidly now, he stuffed the treasure into a gray felt bag, closed the ceremonial casket, and retraced his steps to the window. He relatched the window, left the wires in place, and climbed to the first floor to check the alarm box. The louvres were glistening; the wax had dissolved. Jim knew he didn't have much time.

He checked for the watchman, saw him disappear behind the company trailer, and then ran for the fence. He was over and out of sight before the old man came around again. Jim laughed softly as he dropped the tool box on the back seat of his car, started the motor and picked up the highway for the beach.

"JIM, HOW COULD YOU?" Karen said in horror as she glanced at the ceremonial bracelet he had clasped around her wrist.

"It was easy," he said, going on to detail his plan.

"That's not what I meant and you know it. Besides, there's nothing you can do with the stuff. How are you going to sell treasure that can be traced?"

"Simple," he said, his eyes glowing in the light that filtered down from the movie screen. "I'll melt down the gold and chip out the stones. They can be sold one by one. And no one is the wiser."

"Except for us. And then there's the curse."

"The hell with the curse. Don't try any of that mumbo-jumbo on me."

"Where's the rest of your treasure?"

"In the car, up the beach a bit. Want to see it?"

"No, thank you," she said icily. "Now if you'll be so kind as to take this with you. I want nothing to do with you *or* your robbery."

He tried to unclasp it but the catch was old and it jammed. "You wait here," he said. "I'll be back with a pliers. Sit tight."

Jim walked down the beach, swearing softly to himself. He was trying to think of a way to bring Karen around when the air was filled with piercing screams. Thinking they were coming from the movie screen nearby, Jim walked on. But then he heard them again.

"Jim. He's got me," Karen cried in anguish. "Help!"

He turned and stared, totally shocked. Karen had fainted. She was lying helpless in the arms of a ghostly apparition. The combination of movie and moonlight revelated the old, leathery, wrinkled head of the figure. He was swathed in ancient, decayed bandages. Instant realization flooded through Jim's brain as Karen's words came back to him.

That's Ser, his mind screamed. That's Ser back for the jewels, the treasure, led to Karen by the bracelet she wore. He stood numbly for a moment as the rest of the warning came back to him. Not only was Ser led there by the power of the gold, but he carried the one thing in this world Jim prized most highly. Karen! With a blinding speed borne of necessity, Jim raced over the five hundred feet of sand separating him from the rest of the treasure.

He flung open the doors of the car, rummaged in the back seat, and came up with the felt sack. There was just a chance, he thought desperately. Just one chance.

He ran back to where the mummy stood waiting.

"Okay, Ser, okay. You win," Jim said. "Here, here are the jewels you're looking for. Here!"

He tossed the bag at the mummy's left foot. It hit the sand and opened, spilling its contents on the soft beach. Ser lowered Karen to the sand and trudged over to the jewels. Jim whipped the pliers out of his pocket and ran over to where Karen lay. He checked her ragged breathing, then snipped the ceremonial bracelet from her wrist. He flung it on the pile Ser was examining.

With methodical precision, Ser gathered the treasure in his massive bandaged hands and, holding it before him, retraced his steps along the beach. Only once did he look back, fixing Jim with a stare the frightened boy knew he would remember for the rest of his life.

Jim watched the retreating figure, until he was lost in the undergrowth which separated the beach from the highway. When Ser had vanished into the night, Jim carried Karen to his car. His hands trembled as he fumbled with the ignition.

"I HOPE YOU'RE satisfied now," Karen said, sipping her coffee. "That thing almost carried me away. Would have too, if you hadn't come around."

Jim swallowed his eggs and glanced around the coffee shop. The

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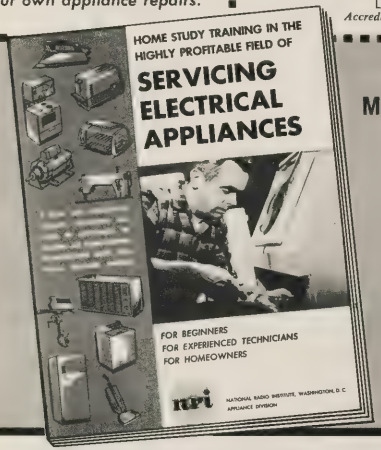

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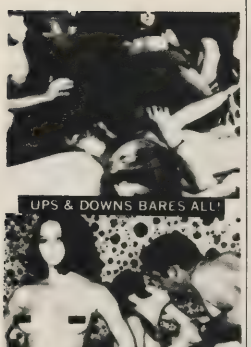

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bright sunlight, filtering through clean windows, had put to rest the previous evening's nightmare.

"What do you think about curses now, smarty?"

"I believe," Jim said sincerely. "The papers must have had a field day with this."

"Oh, not really. They just said that potential thieves had come into the County Museum through a window in the new wing. Officials at the museum figured they were heading for the new shipment of Indian artifacts on the first floor. Then the wax seeped out of the alarm, it went off, and they broke out through the front door. Poof!"

"Do you think they'll ever come looking for me?"

"Why bother? Nothing of value was taken."

Nothing of value indeed, Jim thought.

"I almost lost you, Karen."

She smiled before answering. "Silly, you know that almost doesn't count." THE END

WHITE MAN'S BLOOD

(Continued from page 31)

the space beneath the wagon beds. A smaller thorn kraal inside the wall of wagons held the bawling ox-teams safely. There were about five white men, three women and a child as well as twenty or so Kaffir servants.

Leydecker whistled softly to himself. This was a strong and well engineered 'laager.' The Zulu were too smart not to know that they would lose heavily in an attack on such a strong force. They must have a hell of a reason.

"My name's Henderson," the Englishman said. He was tall and heavily built with jet black hair and a bulldog look to his pink jaw. "These are my wagons. Come. I'll introduce you to the others." The other whites in the party were Henderson's younger brother and wife, a white hunter named MacEnzie, and two servants Henderson had brought from England. The remaining two women were Henderson's wife and sister-in-law. The child was his daughter.

As they approached the two women on the far side of the circle, Leydecker nearly gasped aloud. Henderson's wife was Hendrika Van Cuyk!

Hendrika's china-blue eyes widened as her husband introduced her. "Meinheer Leydecker and I have met, Ronald," she said without expression. "He is an old friend of . . . of my father."

"Oh, you knew old Van Cuyk?" asked Henderson.

"I fought under him at Jamestown," said Leydecker, looking bitterly at Hendrika. She flushed slightly and dropped her eyes.

"Oh, were you with the Boers during the war?" Henderson stammered. "Somehow I fancied you an Englishman. I mean, you don't have much of an accent."

"I spent a few years in an English prison camp," Leydecker replied, as his grey eyes lashed at Hendrika like invisible ships. "It gave me much time to practice your language. I find it handy, now that our land belongs to Victoria. It seems that all the people worth knowing speak it nowadays."

"I say, sir, you seem to forget yourself!" sputtered Henderson. "I mean, damn it all, this is neither the time nor the place to re-fight the war, what? I wasn't in the bloody thing anyway, thank God."

"I'm sorry," said Leydecker. "You're quite right. I just feel sorry for myself once in a while. Can't resist twisting the lion's tail now and then. My God, is that little Alfreda?"

Hendrika's sister had been a mere child the last time he'd seen her. Now he suddenly recognized the blooming young blonde holding Henderson's daughter as the gangling fourteen-year-old who'd waved goodbye as he'd marched forever away from that little settlement outside of Johannesburg to join her father's Kommando.

"It's about time you recognized me, Karl Leydecker," she laughed. Then in Afrikaans she said, glancing at her older sister, "We heard you were dead, Karl. Papa came home after the fighting and told us you'd been killed at Broken Hill. Hendrika waited until . . ."

"Speak English!" Leydecker said bleakly. "It's rude to speak a strange language in front of someone. Haven't you been taught that?"

One of the men across the laager shouted. The two men hurried over and looked out across the velt where the hunter, MacEnzie, was pointing.

A GIGANTIC Zulu was approaching with his right hand held aloft in peace. In his left he carried a five foot 'bangwan' or stabbing assagai. Around his waist was a kilt of long black hair from the colombsu monkey. On his head was a bonnet of ostrich feathers.

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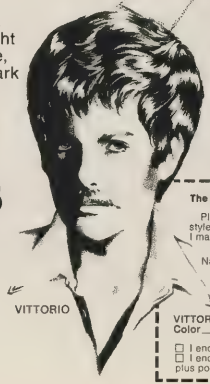

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said MacEnzie drawing a bead on him with his double eight elephant gun.

"A Herald! I come as a Herald!" the Zulu shouted in Bantu. He stopped a dozen yards from the wagons and stuck the sharp butt of his spear in the clay.

"Speak, O Herald!" shouted Leydecker in Zulu, "but come not closer lest the hyena gnaw thy bones this night!" It wouldn't do to let the Zulu see how many, or how few, there were inside the laager.

"I speak for the great Koos, Indaba-Zimba! He of the sure eye! He who shoots and never misses! Slayer of elephants! Eater up of lions! Leader of the royal Impi of the Umtetwa! A ringed son of the ringed son of Chaka! Hear then, O white men, the words of Indaba-Zimba! Hear and tremble!"

Leydecker interrupted him. Once a Zulu started into a speech he would go on all day.

"Speak then, Herald," he shouted. "Speak now the words of thy Koos as I weary of thine which are as the humming of flies in the ear of an elephant. If thou hast something to say then say it! Else begone ere I tire of thee and leave thy rotting flesh for the jackal!"

The Zulu drew himself up in anger and pointed at his spear. "Seest thou this assagai before me white man? Mark it well!"

"I see thy toy. What of it?"

"Before the sun has set twice I shall drive this through thee! I shall eat thee up and dance in thy guts!"

Leydecker smiled wryly. "Art thou to bark all day, jackal? Speak thy message and be gone. Speak thy message before yon cloud covers the sun lest I kill thee as thou blabber!"

"My message is this, white dog, The great Koos has decided to show mercy. Though why this should be puzzles me greatly. In exchange for thy cattle and women he offers thy miserable lives. We will let those who have horses ride out unharmed. This is his message. The great Koos has spoken."

Leydecker stepped forward from the shade of the wagon. He took off his wide brimmed hat. The sun beat down on his prematurely grey head and lean sunburned features. The Zulu gripped his assagai and started to draw it from the ground when sudden recognition crossed his features. Suddenly his face widened in a grin.

"Hello, Unkungo," said Leydecker.

"Koos! Koos-y-Pagate! Koos Baba! Great hunter! Brave one! Quick one! One who clasps the hand of a friend and never lets it go! Brave warrior of the Boer people whom even the ringed warriors of Dingaan feared. It has been five years since a messenger of the Amazulu said that the great white comrade of Unkung was killed by the British at Broken Hill. And here I see thee in the flesh! Truly my people were wise to say that while a mountain may never meet a mountain a man may meet a man at least once ere he dies, and behold! I, the fortunate one, have met one twice!

"But what art thou doing in the laager of the British jackals who ate up thy people?"

"A good question, old friend. And one that is hard to answer," said Leydecker. "But since my old comrades, the Zulu, have taken to killing white men and have driven me into their camp I have little choice."

"Was that thee we shot at a few moments ago? I am happy that we missed thee, though I cursed when I shot thy horse and thou ran as the wind so that my bullets all missed thee. Truly we thought thou wert with yon safari of dogs!

"Well, no damage has been done. We have another horse. Come away with me from this doomed laager and ride in peace. I shall speak as thy friend and no Zulu shall raise his hand against the great friend of Unkungo and live!"

Leydecker turned and looked at the puzzled white faces peering out from the wagons. What did he owe any of them? The English had robbed his people of land they had held for centuries. Every boat that docked at the cape brought more of them to grub for diamonds.

Already the land was changing. The game was being shot off. The streams were choked with silt from the diggings. Within his lifetime South Africa would be no more as he had known it. Why care if Africa claimed a few more lives before it was tamed?

Was it Hendrika? What did he owe her? She was MARRIED to one of the 'Roynekken!' But he knew before he spoke what his answer must be. All he had to do was ride out of here and live but he knew he must stay and die with the rest.

I HAVE CLASPED the hand of the English," he said. "Thou knowest me well enough to know I can not ride out unless the other white people ride with me. But what is thy quarrel? Why do the Zulu make war upon the white men? I have heard it said that the Zulu have made peace with the English."

"They have given insult to the great Koos, Indaba-Zimba," the Zulu answered. "Ten days ago this Safari of English were camped near our kraal by the blue hills. Our Koos went to speak with the white man of the red face. He came in peace and unarmed. He came to trade 'salted' cattle for tobacco as we often do when the white men trek this way, for we know that they lose many oxen along the way from red-water and lung-rot.

"In the laager of the white man with the red face he was insulted. He recognized the daughter of his old friend Van Cuyk the Boer and went to speak to her. The white Inkusi greeted him politely but the man of the red face struck Indaba-Zimba with his fist and called him 'Nigger.'

"I know not what is this name as there is nothing called 'Nigger' this side of Johannesburg, but our Koos was insulted anyway and sent word that he would fight man to man with the red-faced one. But the coward packed his women and wagons and fled the scene of his infamy. Now we mean to kill him."

"But did you not say the men could go free if they gave you the women and cattle?"

"That is what we said. For what does it matter what one says to a man without honor? As they rode out we intended to kill them. We have no quarrel with the daughters of Van Cuyk who was ever our good friend. But the Englishman must die!"

Leydecker thought wildly. There might be a way out for everyone. "What if the Englishman offers to fight thy Koos in single combat?" he asked. "The quarrel is not between thy people and mine, but the hatred of the two Koosi! Let them fight to the death then, man to man! Then much blood will be spared and the women need not wail in thy kraal nor mine!"

Unkungo nodded soberly. "I shall take thy offer to my leader," he answered. "The sun is nearly set. If he agrees I shall return. If I do not return it shall mean that many men will die ere it sets again. And thee, old friend, where will I find thee if we attack this laager? Thou knowest I give thee safe conduct."

"I shall be inside the circle of wagons, Unkungo," Leydecker answered.

"I pray then, that our Koos will offer single combat to the English leader. Because I shall be in the first charge," said Unkungo and turned away to go back to the Zulu lines.

Leydecker went back inside the

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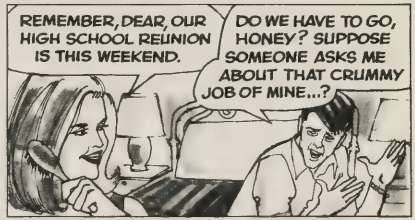
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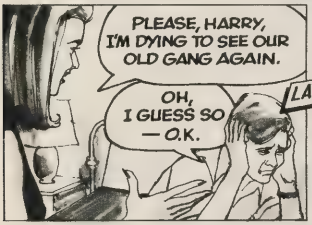

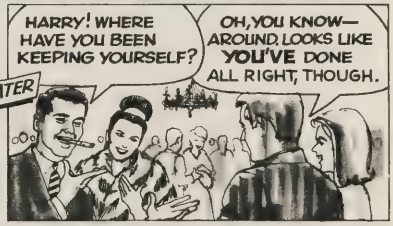

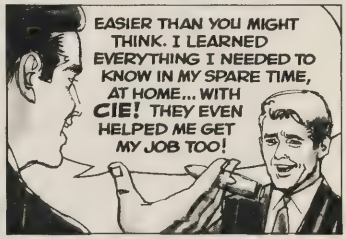
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thorn-bush barricade and the whites gathered around while he told them of his conversation. Henderson was furious. His face turned even redder, if possible.

"I say, that's a bit thick!" he sputtered when Leydecker told him of the proposed duel. "I mean, it's all very well of you to offer to fight the beggar, but it's me that has to *do* the rudding job!"

"Have you ever seen a wagon laager after the Zulu have 'eaten it up'?" asked Leydecker. "They have a superstition that it's unlucky to leave the guts in a corpse. Seems they think that as the body swells in the hot sun their bad luck will grow. After they kill everybody they rip them open and pile their intestines neatly and dance around for a while on them. That's what happens to the lucky ones.

"If you happen to be taken alive your troubles have just begun. I don't have to tell you what happens to the women. The men are usually turned loose. Of course they cut off your eyelids and strip the soles off your feet first. One fellow actually made it to a settlement one time. After they amputated his feet and took his rotting eyeballs out he was almost as good as ever. Only thing was, he was stark raving mad."

As Leydecker finished he looked around at his audience. The two English servants were green. Henderson's younger brother and wife were looking at each other in mute horror. Only MacEnzie and the Van Loon sisters remained calm. They hadn't heard anything new.

"But damn it all," Henderson said, "what will happen to my wife and child if I'm killed?"

"Probably nothing," Leydecker replied grimly. "Indaba-Zimba will be so happy he'll let the rest of us go. Don't forget that he has nothing against anyone here but you. In fact he considered himself a friend of your wife's father. As for me, I can walk out of here any time I want."

"Then why the devil don't you?" shouted Henderson peevishly. "Kaffir-loving Boer! I've got a good mind to thrash you!"

"Save it for Indaba-Zimba," Leydecker sighed wearily, "unless you're afraid of him. It's the only way we're going to get out of the mess that you stirred up. If you *are* afraid don't make me break a knuckle on your jaw. I'll need both hands in good shape when the Zulu attacks."

One of the native ox-drovers suddenly shouted in fear. Coming across the open velt was the giant Zulu, Unkungo!

LEYDECKER strode forward from the laager to meet him. The big Kaffir grinned as he approached. "Good news! Friend of my youth!" he smiled. "Our great Koos has agreed to single combat! It is near sundown. Through the night he will prepare for battle. He will make up his death poem and prepare the medicine of his mouti. In the first light of dawn he will come. He will bring twin assagais so that the Englishman may choose. Then they will fight? Does the English Koos agree with this arrangement?"

Leydecker turned and relayed the message to Henderson. The big Englishman was plainly frightened. For a moment he hesitated. Then he looked at Hendrika and his little blonde daughter playing in the shade of a wagon. He turned back to Leydecker and said. "Tell the blighter I'll fight his bloody chief. But damn it, I don't even know how to hold an assagai. Can't you make it something more civilized?"

"How about a sword?" asked Leydecker.

"Lord, yes!" Henderson said, brightening slightly. "I used to muck about with fencing in school. Never was too good at it but at least I've a notion of what to do with the bloody thing!"

Leydecker turned to the Zulu Herald and said that Henderson would fight Indaba-Zimba with simes at dawn. Unkungo nodded happily and left. Leydecker looked up at the setting sun and returned to the laager.

It was decided that the men would stand four-hour shifts during the night. The Zulu had given their word but no one wanted to take a chance on waking with an assagai through the belly. Leydecker drew the third watch. It was a moonless night. He saw on a box of salt-bacon with his Winchester resting across the tongue of a wagon.

There was a faint orange glow from the rim-rock at the edge of the valley that marked the distant camp of the Zulu. Now and then a jackal would howl in the darkness and once he heard the hunting cough of a lion. He hoped it was a lion. That grunting roar, made with an eland horn, was a favorite Zulu signal.

He heard her before he made out her white dress in the dim light. He'd been half expecting her and in spite of himself he felt his heart beat faster. "Good evening, Vrau Henderson!" he said coldly in Afrikaans.

"It's not Hendrika, Karl," a soft voice answered. Alfreda Van Cuyk came closer and stood leaning against the wheel of the wagon. Leydecker said nothing. After a few moments of uncomfortable silence Alfreda spoke. "She waited for you, Karl. Even after Papa came back from the 'Roynekkers' prison and told us he'd seen you fall at the battle of Broken Hill she waited. After everyone else had given you up for dead she waited. But a woman can't wait forever, Karl."

Leydecker stared out at the darkness for a long time before he spoke. At last, almost to himself, he said, "After Smuts and the others surrendered, your father still held out. The war was over, they said. But not for us it wasn't. The Transvaal was ours! It was bought with blood and sweat of our fathers! Let politicians surrender to the 'Roynekken' but we would fight to the last bullet! Hah! I was younger then. I thought that when our Kommando leaders said this they meant it. But we live and learn, ja?

"When I fell with an English bullet where my belt buckle should have been at Broken Hill I thought at least I'd done my bit to hold the land for our people. Five years the English held me in prison. I was lucky. They could have shot me as an irregular. But for five years I told myself that our people would fight on. That men like me would drive them from our land. Hah! I was a fool!

"And when I came back what did I find? Our people speaking English! Our land covered with them digging for diamonds! Gottverdamnt! This land is good for cattle and crops! It was not put here by God to dig up and cover with blue clay so that some fat English Vrau should wear diamonds around her thick neck like a Watusi maiden with her copper necklace! They told me of the death of your father. They told me of Hendrika's marriage. But by God they didn't tell me she'd married a 'Roynekker!'"

Alfreda put her hand on his shoulder. "Ronald Henderson is a good man," she said, "and it's not his fault he's English. He's been very good to my sister. After Papa died there were very few among our people who were good to either of us. At least the English didn't drive us from our home with the meanness of our own good neighbors! When the people of the village jeered and taunted us we went to Johannesburg. Even there the Boers were the ones, not the British, who made the insulting remarks."

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"What are you talking about?" asked Leydecker. "Why should our people turn against you and Hendrika?"

"Because of the baby!" Alfreda cried, "Didn't you know? After you were gone Hendrika had a child!"

"That little girl? But who . . . ?" His voice died. He didn't have to ask. He'd never forgotten that last night before he'd gone off to join his Kommando. How many times over the past years had he relived that one wonderful night when he'd held his sweetheart in his naked arms in the sweet scented hayloft of her father's barn? And poor Hendrika had paid for the moment of stolen happiness. Paid for it by being hounded by the stolid Puritan villagers.

Leydecker closed his eyes and groaned. He suddenly knew what he must do. And a great peace settled in his mind for the first time in years. He turned to Alfreda to thank her but she was gone. A hyena called out on the velt and was answered by wry laughter. But not by another hyena.

DAWN CAME SUDDENLY as always in the tropics. The first rosy light had scarcely appeared before the rising sun shot a dazzling ray across the velt. Up on the rim-rocks around the valley the Zulu were already massed, shivering in the morning cold.

A party of thirty or forty Zulu approached the laager. In the lead was Unkungo and a tall slender ringed man carrying a big .500 Express rifle. Leydecker guessed at once that this was Indaba-Zimba.

The Zulu chief was a man of about forty. He was covered with scars from countless battles. His ebony skin had been rubbed with palm oil until it glistened like patent leather. He came to within a few yards of the laager and stopped. A slave ran over and knelt down to form a living stool. The chief placed the butt of his rifle on the ground and sat down on the slave's back.

Unkungo stepped forward and began to chant, "Behold, O white jackal, the great Koos, Indaba-Zimba. He of the hawk's eye! He who shoots and never misses! When he strides forth all his enemies quake! When he roars in anger the earth trembles! Come forth, O cowering white man and meet thy death! Come forth that Indaba-Zimba may dance in thy guts!"

Henderson came to the barricade and looked at his foe. His fleshy red face was covered with sweat. He turned to Leydecker. "I guess it would be a bit awkward to back out now, what?" he asked. Leydecker nodded. "Oh, well," the Englishman sighed, "better get on with it then." He turned and looked at Hendrika. She was holding her daughter's hand. The child asked in a bewildered voice, "Where are you going, Daddy?"

Henderson smiled and shook his head. "It's all right, kitten. Daddy's going to see a man about something. You go back in the wagon with aunt 'Freda like a good girl, what?" Turning to Leydecker he said, "Look here, if . . . if anything should go wrong . . . you—you'll look after things, what? I mean, you're a friend of the family and all that, eh?"

"Don't worry. Everything's going to be all right," said Leydecker and hit him as hard as he could flush on the jaw!

The big Englishman swayed like a felled tree and sank to the ground. The little girl cried, "What have you done to my daddy?" and ran to him. Leydecker brushed her lightly on the head with his calloused hand. Looking at Hendrika he said, "It's all right, Liepschen. Your daddy will be all right!" Then he turned and walked out of the laager.

"Where is the one with the pink face?" asked the Zulu chief suspiciously.

"I come in his place, O Koos. For I am his blood-brother and his quarrel is my quarrel. Further, O Koos of the Amazulu, he is sick from red-water and not strong enough to fight such a warrior as thee. Therefore I challenge thee to fight me instead."

"My anger is not with thee, white man. Send the coward forth who hideth ere I call my warriors to battle and all must die within yon laager. For I have been most mortally insulted by the pink one and I mean to cut him open this day."

Leydecker laughed derisively. "Dost thou fear me then, O fighter of sick men and women? What honor is there in killing a sick and foolish Englishman? Let thee dance in the guts of a Boer Askiri who has slain a hundred men better than thee and see if they call thee dishonored in thy kraal."

The Zulu rose to his full height and his face contorted with rage. "So be it!" he thundered. "Let us fight, then. Since thou art so ready to die. Unkungunklovo! Give this dog his choice of weapons!"

Unkungo stepped forward with two nearly identical simes in wooden sheaths. "This is madness, my friend!" he muttered. "The great Koos will eat thee up!"

Leydecker grunted and selected his sword. It was of Arab manufacture. Eighteen inches long and sharp as a razor.

He whirled it around his head a few times to test the balance and stepped back to signify he was ready. Indaba-Zimba removed his headdress and tossed it over his shoulder. The slave caught it. He took the sime that was handed to him and whirled it around a few times. Then, without warning, he shouted the Zulu war cry "S'Kee S'Kee!" and hurled himself at Leydecker.

THE WIRY BOER barely managed to fling up his arm to ward off the murderous swipe of the sime. The blades rang like a bell as they clashed overhead. Then Indaba-Zimba smiled in triumph and drove a vicious underhand thrust in under Leydecker's guard. The sime sank through the Boer's midsection until the Zulu's knuckles touched his shirt.

The great Koos was still smiling when Leydecker slashed down with his sime and split his skull open!

The ebony warrior let go of the sime and fell in a sodden heap at Leydecker's feet. The Boer looked down at him and swayed a moment before he made a meaningless gesture. Then he fell across the body of Indaba-Zimba.

Unkungo stepped forward and rolled him over. He was dead. And for the first time in six years, his face was at peace. The Zulu turned as he heard footsteps behind him. It was Alfreda. She threw herself across the body of the man she'd loved since she was 14 and sobbed. The big Zulu started to speak. But for the first time he could remember, words wouldn't come to Unkungo.

Silently he motioned to the other Zulu. They walked wordlessly away from the two corpses and the girl who wept bitterly by them.

Back in the laager, Henderson groaned and woke up. He found himself lying with his head in his wife's leap. His little step-daughter was holding his hand. He rubbed his aching jaw and looked up at Hendrika. There were tears in her eyes. He thought at the time they were for him. And they were, partly.

"By Jove!" he said, "that fellow, Leydecker, hit me! Now what in the world made him do a thing like that?"

Hendrika smoothed his ruffled hair gently. He was a good man even if he was somewhat of a fool. Softly, she said, "I don't think you will ever understand why." THE END

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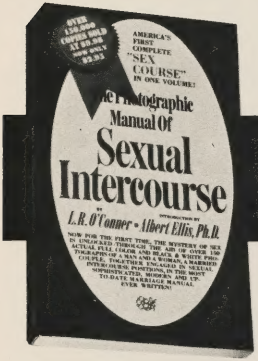

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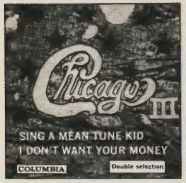

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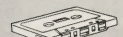

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COLUMBIA HOUSE, Terre Haute, Indiana 47808

Please accept my membership. I am interested in this type of recorded entertainment: **(check one only)**

- ☐ 8-Track Cartridges G13-8/AN
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- ☐ Reel-to-Reel Tape G45-4/BX
- ☐ 12" LP Records N39-4/72

Send me the seven selections indicated at the right, for which I will be billed only $3.98, plus mailing and handling. My only membership obligation is to buy as few as seven selections during the coming year, under the terms outlined in this advertisement. I may cancel membership any time thereafter. If I continue, I will be eligible for your bonus plan.

SEND THESE SEVEN SELECTIONS FOR $3.98

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.

MY MAIN MUSICAL INTEREST IS (check one box only)

☐ Easy Listening ☐ Today's Sounds ☐ Country

☐ Mr.
☐ Mrs.
☐ Miss.
(Please print) First Name Initial Last Name

Address.....

City.....State.....Zip.....

Do you have a telephone? (check one) ☐ YES ☐ NO

APO, FPO addressees: write for special offer

CANADIANS: mail application to USA address. Enrollment plan may differ. Prices slightly higher. Serviced from Canada.

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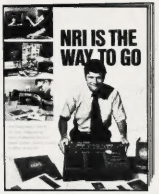
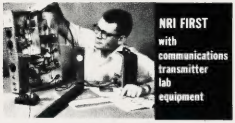


COLOR TV SERVICING comes alive as you build your own set (color or black and white.) Building, stage-by-stage, you get a professional understanding of all circuits through demonstration.



COMMUNICATIONS experience equal to many months on the job is yours in NRI's complete training. Build your own transmitter suitable for amateur use. FCC License preparation included. You get your license, or money back.

INDUSTRIAL ELECTRONICS includes use of transistors, solid-state devices, printed circuits. You build and use digital computer circuits, other electronic devices. Choose from several specialized courses.

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Prepare quickly to step up your income as a skilled Technician

A few years ago, an income of $6,000 or $7,000 a year was considered good. Not any more. Today you deserve more than that —and it's waiting for you if you're trained to take advantage of the constant demand for skilled technicians in TV Servicing or Communications or Industrial Electronics. Even if your education is limited, you can qualify quickly for higher pay by training at home the NRI "hands-on" way. Keep your job while you prepare for a brighter future.

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Tens of thousands of NRI graduates are proof it's practical to train at home. Earn $5 to $7 an hour extra in your spare time as you train, fixing sets for friends and neighbors. NRI shows you how. Decide NOW to move ahead, to break the $150 a week income barrier. Check your choice of 15 training plans and mail coupon today for FREE NRI COLOR CATALOG. No obligation. *No salesman will call.* NRI, Electronics Division, Washington, D.C. 20016.

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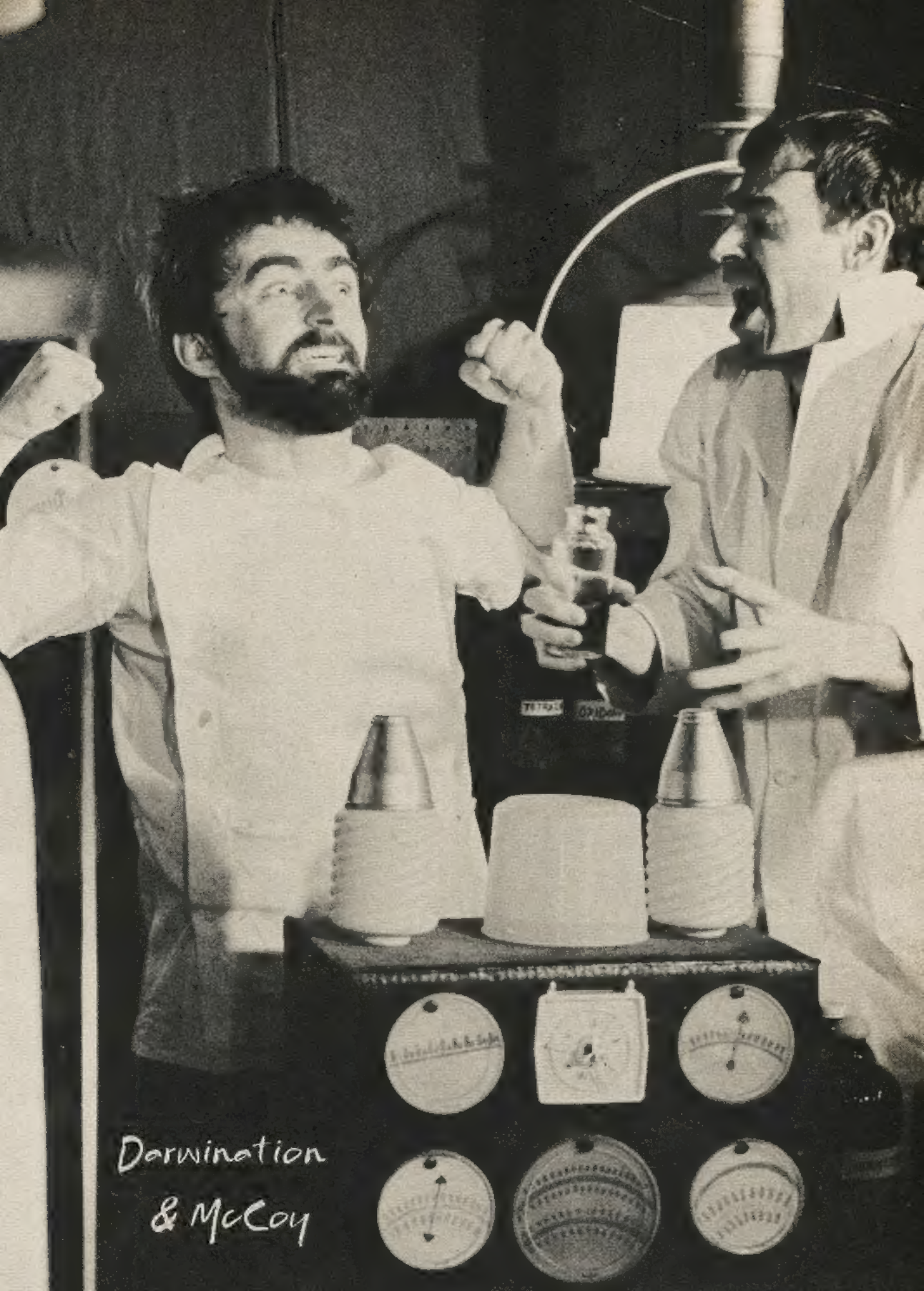
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